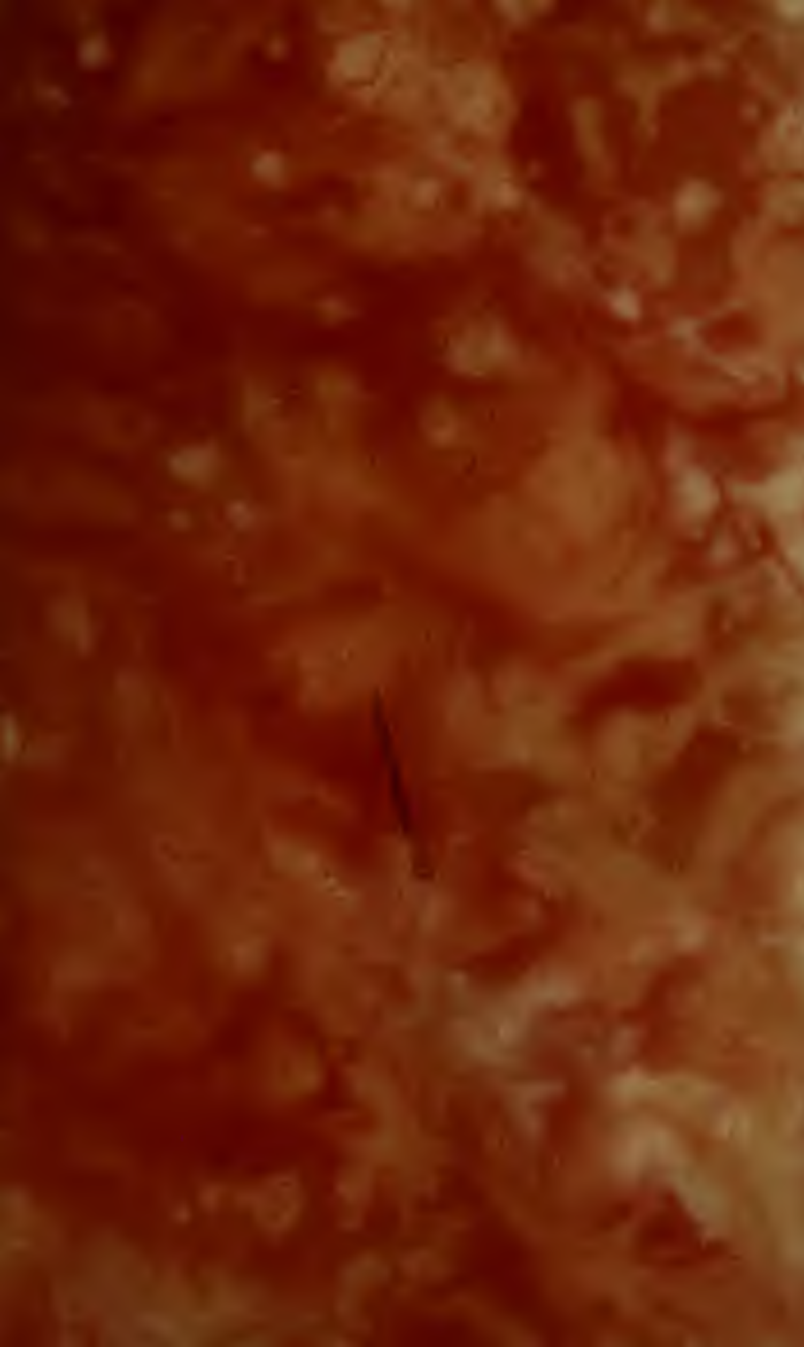


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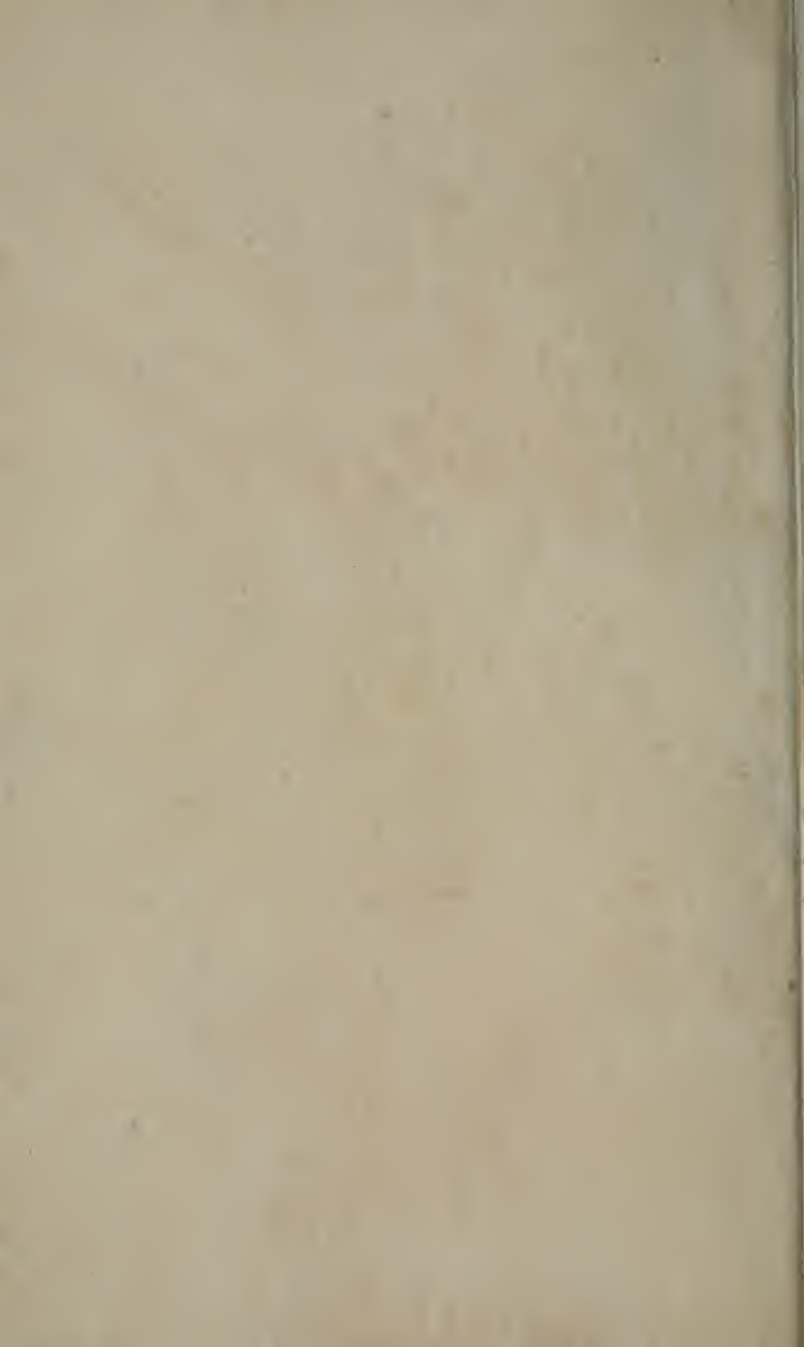
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HEIDELBERG.

VOL. III.



HEIDELBERG.

A Romance.

BY

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"THE SMUGGLER;" "ARRAH NEIL;" "THE STEP-MOTHER;"

ETC. ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON :

SMITH, ELDER AND CO., 65, CORNHILL.

1846.

London :
Printed by STEWART and MURRAY,
Old Bailey.

823

J23h

1846

v.3

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CHAPTER I.

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THERE were a few murmured words at the door of that large room where Algernon Grey had waited to know the pleasure of the Queen of Bohemia; there was a soft pressure of the hand; and then, by an irresistible impulse, which mastered forethought, reason, and resolution, he drew the sweet girl, who stood beside him gently towards him, and pressed his lips upon hers. No human form was seen in the corridor; it was dim, nearly dark, lighted by one faint lamp; but yet, though none saw, his heart smote him; and he said, "Forgive me, Agnes, forgive me, dear one! such a moment, such events, may well excuse

one token of eternal tenderness towards you who are so dear."

"I do forgive you, Algernon," said Agnes, very pale; "but oh, do not, do not!"

"I will farther ask your forgiveness hereafter," answered Algernon; "when my whole heart shall be laid before you. Then, I think, you will pardon me, when you see the terrible struggle which has agitated me so long."

"Yes—I am sure I shall find nothing to forgive," she replied; "but yet you must not do this again; for, if you do, I shall doubt—I shall fear."

"Fear not," answered Algernon Grey, raising her hand to his lips; "on my honour, on my truth, I will give you no cause to doubt or fear—No, no, Agnes, you cannot doubt me."

"Nor do I, nor do I," she said, laying her other hand upon his; "oh no, I am sure you are all that is noble and good.—Farewell, farewell!—we part in a terrible moment. Do not expose yourself rashly; but come back with victory, if it be possible, and if not, still come back to protect poor Agnes Herbert in the moment of danger and need."

He did not answer ; but again and again he kissed her hand ; and then, turning away, he strode along the wide corridor towards the head of the great stairs.

He thought he heard a low laugh from the farther end of the passage, but his mind was in no state to attend to trifles ; and, descending rapidly, he found himself the next moment in the wide vestibule below. All the servants and attendants were absent. The two large chairs, in which the chief porters sat, were vacant ; the broad table, at which the pages and daily waiters played at different games, displayed not a single figure learning the shortest road to vice and folly. Algernon Grey was walking quickly across, when he heard—proceeding from a door at the side—a well-known voice pronounce his name.

“What, Algernon !” cried William Lovet ; and the young Englishman, as he turned round, could see the foot of a narrow staircase faintly marked beyond the doorway, near which Lovet stood ; “what, Algernon ! you here ? You, a man of feuds and battle-fields, contemner of love and all soft delights,—you

within the silky precincts of a court, where the star of beauty reigns supreme; and Eros holds one side of the house, while Bacchus holds the other! Wonders will never cease! I shall expect to see old Christian of Anhalt tripping it gaily with Amelia of Solms in some gay ball, or the Prince of Hohenloe twirling round upon his toes, with heels unspurred, and a soft simper on his bellicose lip. In fortune's name! what has brought you hither?"

"Business, my good cousin," answered Algernon Grey; "and that business none of mine. The secret is another's; therefore it must rest where it is—in my own bosom."

"Good," answered Lovet, "exceeding good. I would not add an ounce-weight to my camp-equipage, for all the secrets that ever yet were kitted. I am neither a great general nor a great diplomatist, thank heaven and the stars that are therein! I can fight and make love, play a shrewd game at cards with a knavish adversary, rattle the dice-box hard and yet throw sixes; but I know nought of the trade of negotiation, thanks be unto God! Your taciturn virtue, with the hat over the left ear,

the moustachio turned up at the corner, and the feather half hiding the right eye, tawny leather boots, a sober doublet, and a sword long enough for Don Pedro of Spain, give you all the qualities requisite for a profound ambassador ; and the gods forbend, that I should meddle with the puddle, or stir the duck-weed of your stagnant diplomacy !—But whither away ? You seem in haste, when every man this night is idling out his moments, what with cups of wine, what with huge surloins, what with bright eyes and sweet smiles, thinking that this same perishable commodity, called Time, may be but scanty in the purse of the future, and that it is but wise to get the money's worth ere it is all expended."

"I am back to the camp with all speed," answered Algernon Grey. "Matters are not going on there as I could wish ; and, moreover, it is late."

"Not too late to take a walk round the ramparts," said Lovet, in a graver tone than he had used. "It is well worth our while, my noble cousin, to look at what is going on there."

"It will occupy much time," answered his

companion, somewhat struck by the change in his manner; "and, in the present state of affairs, we shall be challenged and stopped by every sentry that we meet with."

"Fear not," answered Lovet, with a slight smile; "I am profoundly intimate with every guard you will meet upon the walls; and I repeat, good cousin, that it is well worth while, for you, at least, who can report to your friend, the general, to see with a soldier's eye the preparations of the what they call the *Kleinseite* of the city of Prague; for, as we shall have a battle to-morrow or the next day, and as Christian of Anhalt, in case of reverse, may think fit to retreat into the town, it is quite right he should know what the city is like. It is a marvellous place, Prague, and mighty tranquil.—But come, tell your horses to go to the gate, mine are there already."

While he had been speaking, his cousin and himself had descended a second flight of steps, and entered the hall close to the great door of the first court. All was still emptiness; and the two gentlemen were left to open the wicket for themselves, without any one to assist them.

"'Tis a pity," said William Lovet, "that Maximilian of Bavaria does not know what is going on here; otherwise he might end the war at once, and might take the Elector himself in the midst of his banquet, like a fat carp in a stew feeding upon groundbait."

There was too much truth, as Algernon Grey felt, in what his cousin said; and, not at all unwilling to obtain some indication of the state of the popular mind in Prague, the young Englishman, when they issued out into the open air, called his servant Tony to his side, and told him to lead his horse down the hill to the gate by which he had entered, and to wait for his coming there.

"Take care where you go, my lord," said the man; "for the people are all as drunk as swine, and mighty quarrelsome to boot. Here is Frill has got into three disputes since you went in, and one regular quarrel, in which he would have got his costard broken had I not interfered and spoken them fair in a language of which they did not understand a word; so that the poor people were convinced, and had nothing to reply. I showed them how tall he

was with my hand, and how tall they were, and I patted my stomach and shrugged my shoulders, and clapped one gentleman on the back till his leathern jerkin fumed like a dusty road ; and, seeing that I was not a German, who are the bullies here in Bohemia, they walked away and left Frill in a whole skin, and me very glad to be quit of their company.—So I beseech you, my good lord, to be careful where you go.”

“ I will take care,” answered Algernon Grey, briefly. “ Go down, as I have told you ;” and taking Lovet’s arm he proceeded through two or three narrow streets, till they came to a low stoney lane, which ran at the foot of the inner wall. After pacing on for about a hundred yards, they found a flight of rude stone steps leading up to the platform above, without railing or balustrade ; and mounting, they walked on looking over the parapet upon the low ground underneath. From time to time they came upon a heavy piece of ordnance, but no soldier appeared beside it ; they passed several flanking towers, but no sentry was seen on guard ; they gazed forth upon the out-works of the place, but from the Hradschin to the

Moldau, neither fire, nor light, nor moving form showed any sign of preparation against attack.

“Now, let men say what they will,” said Lovet, in his usual keen sarcastic tone, “this city of Prague is a strong and well-defended place; and so watched and guarded as it is, so harmonious and faithful within, and with a united and an enthusiastic army without, keen must be the courage, and overpowering the force, that will subdue it to an enemy. You can do what you like, Algernon, but if you would take my advice, you would do either one of two things: go to old Christian of Anhalt, tell him that Prague is in the most perfect state of defence, well provisioned, well watched, and well garrisoned, and that in case of defeat he may retreat into it in all security; or else, bring your men and horses to the gate, walk back to the palace, tell fair Agnes Herbert that you have come to conduct her in safety to Heidelberg, mount and away. You understand what I mean; as for myself, my course is taken.”

Algernon Grey grasped him by the arm, and gazed in his face by the light of the moon.

“ You do not mean to say,” he exclaimed, “ that such is the course you intend to pursue ?”

“ Oh no, cousin mine,” answered Lovet, “ two or three causes combine to prevent me ; first, you know I have an old fondness for fighting, merely for fighting’s sake ; and I would just as soon think of leaving a good dinner untouched, as of going away when a battle is in preparation. Next, you see I have no one to take with me, for dear, sweet, insipid, tiresome Madam de Laussitz has gone back with her fat husband to set up virtue and dignity in their own patrimonial halls. Then thirdly, and lastly, having no object anywhere, I may just as well be here as in another place. Life is getting wonderfully dull to me, Algeron ; and I do not even find the same pleasure in a battle that I used to do. However, it is a little more amusing than anything else, and therefore I shall stay and see it. If I am killed, the matter of the future is settled to my hand. If I survive, and the Austrians beat, which I suppose they certainly will, I shall set spurs to my horse, and give him such a gallop as he has not had since he was bitted. If the

Bohemians, by any chance win the victory, I shall go on with them and help them to sack Vienna. I never saw a capital city pillaged ; and it must be very amusing."

He spoke in the most ordinary tone possible ; in which, perhaps, there was a slight touch of habitual affectation ; but Algernon Grey, who could not view things so lightly, nor treat them so when he regarded them otherwise, pondered upon his words, and after a moment's silence, asked, "What makes you think it so positively certain that the Austrians will be successful? We have often known a battle won with a much greater disparity of numbers."

"Come with me and I will show you, Algernon," answered William Lovet ; and, walking on till they came to the third tower from the gate, they passed the only sentinel they had seen, giving the word in answer to his challenge, and then issuing forth from the town, mounted their horses and rode on to the Star.

"Now let us send the beasts back," said Lovet, when they reached the foot of the Weissenberg ; "and mounting by this little path on foot, we shall have a full view of this

grand army, which is to do such mighty things to-morrow."

Algernon Grey followed in silence, after ordering the page to inform young Christian of Anhalt that he would be back in half an hour. For about three or four hundred yards, as they ascended, the army was hidden from their sight by some tall trees and bushes; but they could see the glare of the watch-fires spreading out into the sky, and hear the murmuring roar of many voices; for the wine and provisions had raised the spirits of the soldiery for a time, and they were wearing away the night in laughter and in song. No sentinel barred their path; no guard demanded the word; for, although strict orders had been issued by the general for extraordinary precautions to be taken, the demoralization of the soldiery, which had been collected on the Weissenberg to support the force under Christian of Anhalt, had become so great before his arrival, that no command was obeyed, except by the force immediately under his own orders; and the sentries, after having been placed, quietly retired to rejoin their comrades round the watch-fires, as soon as the eyes of the officers were withdrawn.

Turning the little patch of underwood, Algernon Grey and Lovet came suddenly upon a group of eight men, stretched out around a pile of blazing wood, singing, jesting, wrangling, with the wild countenances, long shaggy beards and hair, strange apparel, and various kinds of arms which designated them as some of the Transylvanian hordes of Bethlem Gabor. They stared up at the two fine, handsome looking men who approached, with a look of savage curiosity, but took no further notice, and the man who was singing even did not interrupt his music. It was a wild, rude air, but not without much plaintive melody; for, though the song seemed to be a bacchanalian one, yet the general tone was melancholy or seemed so to the ear of Algernon Grey.

“Speak to them, Algernon, speak to them,” said Lovet, after they had watched them for a moment or two.

“They will not understand a word I say,” answered his cousin. “Do you not see? These are the Transylvanians.”

“Oh,” answered Lovet, and walked on.

Without saying another word, he led the

way along the rise of the hill, on which was spread out the force of the auxiliaries, and at length came to a small open space kept by a sentinel or two of Christian of Anhalt's own force, to prevent any tumult or quarrelling between the Bohemians and Transylvanians. Here the two gentlemen were challenged; but, giving the word, they passed on through the Bohemian bivouacs, where some greater degree of order and discipline was observable. From time to time, indeed, a scene of great noise and confusion presented itself; and once or twice blows were given, and even knives drawn, so that the constant interference of the officers was required to keep peace amongst a violent and easily excited people. In other places, however, the men were stretched out around their fires asleep; and here and there they were talking quietly, though with somewhat gloomy and discontented looks."

"Now, ask some of these fellows, Algernon," said Lovet, "how they like the prospect of tomorrow?"

"I do not speak Bohemian," answered Algernon Grey.

“But do not they understand German?” asked his cousin.

“Not a word,” said Algernon, gazing in his face; “you would not persuade me, Lovet, that you have been so long amongst them without discovering that fact?”

“No,” replied Lovet; “but I have discovered something more, Algernon: that the discord is not only in the tongues of this host, though Babel could scarcely match it in confusion of languages, but in the spirit, character, customs, views, and feelings, of those who compose it. It is, in fact, a mere mob of different nations, English, Scotch, Germans, Bohemians, Transylvanians, Silesians, Moravians, and Dutch, without one common bond between them, not understanding each the other’s tongue, no man having a fellow-feeling for his neighbour, no zeal, no esprit de corps, and one-half of them not knowing what they are brought here for at all. Now I say, that if this corps beats the regular and well-disciplined Austrians and Bavarians, it must be by a miracle from heaven; for no human means will ever produce such a result—so now, good-night, cousin;

I shall go to my tent and sleep ; for as there is a chance of this being the last evening of my life, I have taken care to make it a merry one ; and I am tired of amusement of different kinds."

"Good-night," said Algernon Grey ; and they parted.

At the door of his tent the young English nobleman found his servant, Tony, and the page, Frill, conversing together in low tones ; and, on asking if they had delivered his message to the young Prince of Anhalt, he was informed that Christian had gone forth to make a round through the camp, and had not yet returned. Algernon Grey perceived that there was a sort of hesitation in the manner of both his attendants ; that Frill gazed at the elder servant, and the old man turned his eyes to the page ; but, suspecting that both might entertain some apprehensions regarding the ensuing day, he did not choose to encourage any questions, and walked at once into the tent.

"Give it yourself, Frill, give it yourself," said Tony, loud enough for his lord to hear ; "has the devil of impudence abandoned you, that

you dare not do what it is your duty to do, when you dare do so much that you ought not?"

Algernon Grey had seated himself before the little table, and the next instant Frill entered the tent, and approached with a paper in his hand, saying, "This dropped from you, my lord, as you were dismounting at the foot of the hill. I found it under the horse's feet."

Algernon Grey took the paper from his hand, and looked at it for a moment before he opened it. He did not recollect its shape and appearance at all. It was folded as if it had been placed in a cover, in form like an ordinary letter, but without seal or address. There was the mark of a horse's shoe across it, so that the boy's story, of where he had found it, was thus far confirmed; and Algernon Grey unfolded it and held it to the lamp. The handwriting was not unfamiliar to him, for he had twice in his life received a letter in the same; but the tone was very different from that in which he had ever himself been addressed, although his relation with the writer might have justified the warmest language that woman can use towards man.

“A whole year and more has passed,” so ran the letter, “and yet you have not returned, nor accomplished that which you undertook. I thirst to see you, to cast myself into your arms again.—I thirst in the midst of all these people, barren and insignificant to me, for the sight of him I love, as the traveller in the desert thirsts for the cool well. Yet come not, till it is accomplished; but strive, if you do love me, to accomplish it soon. Take any means,—take all means. Tell him, that I hate him; that I shall ever hate him; that his cold and precise nature can never assimilate with my fiery and impetuous disposition; that those who linked us to one another, tried to bind flame and ice together. Tell him, that I say I hate him. Tell him, if you will, that I love you. Require him to break this bond, as has been often done before; and let him know, if he persists, it shall be for his own wretchedness; that every hour of his union with me shall be an hour of misery; that every minute shall have its grief, or woman’s wit shall fail me. If all this does not decide him, you must seek some other means.—I leave them to you, but the

man's life cannot be charmed ; at all events, do what you have to do speedily, my William, and then fly to my arms. I will not put my name, but there will be no need of guessing twice.—Farewell !”

Algernon Grey laid down the letter on the table, and gazed at it sternly for a moment, then raised his eyes to the page, who had retired to the other side of the tent near the entrance.

“Come hither, boy,” he said ; and as the youth, with a slow and faltering step, advanced towards him, his lord added, “you have read this letter ?”

“A part, my lord,” replied Frill, with his knees shaking. “Tony thought I had better read it, to find out whom it belonged to.”

“You do not pretend to say,” continued Algernon Grey, “that when you had read it, you believed it belonged to me.

The boy hesitated and turned crimson, and then murmured, “Tony thought it ought to belong to you, whoever it was sent to.”

“Call him hither, and return yourself,” said Algernon Grey ; but the boy had not far to go, for the old servant was still waiting

without. When he appeared, however, his air and manner was different from that of the page ; he seemed very grave indeed, but calm and firm, and while the boy slunk behind him, he advanced boldly to the table by which his lord sat.

“How is it,” said Algernon Grey, “that you, an old and faithful servant of my house, I might say almost a friend, have induced this boy to deceive me regarding a letter which was never intended for my eye?”

“Because, my lord,” replied Tony, “there were things in it never intended for your eye indeed, but which it is right and necessary you should see ; and there are a great many things, never intended for your ear, that it is only just you should hear.”

“Indeed !” said Algernon Grey. “In this, however, you have done wrong, though I doubt not that your intention was good. You should never attempt to deceive. You should have spoken to me boldly and straightforwardly, and I might have thanked you then for information which now is burdensome to me.”

“Why, you forbade me, my lord, ever to say anything to you against your cousin, Sir Wil-

liam, again," replied the servant; "you thought I was prejudiced against him, that I had some hatred towards him, and so, when a means came of opening your eyes, I determined I would take it at any risk; otherwise I could have told you a great deal about this long ago."

"From what source came your information?" asked Algernon Grey.

"First from old Paul Watson," answered Tony, "who was killed at Rakonitz. When we were coming out of Heidelberg, just before the thunderstorm, he told me that your cousin had been spending all his time, before he came abroad hither, in making love to the lady Catherine, though he knew her to be your affianced wife. — Then, my good lord, when we first came to this place, and the king's courier went over to England, I got him to take a letter for me to my brother, who soon sent me plenty more intelligence, which I will show you, if we live over-to-morrow."

"To what effect?" asked his master, in a low deep tone.

"To the effect that this has been going on for years," answered Tony; "and that

there is many a strange and scandalous story in the country, which makes this woman no wife for you, my lord."

"And yet she is my wife," muttered Algernon Grey to himself. Then waving his hand to the servant, he said, "Leave me."

The page instantly withdrew; but Tony lingered for a moment or two, and then said, "I hope you will forgive me, my lord; for I see that this has made you very unhappy. I can't help thinking, however, that it is little worth while to vex one's self about such a woman, when there is more than one of the sweetest and the best who would be happy enough to be your wife."

A faint smile crossed Algernon Grey's countenance. "It is not her conduct makes me unhappy, my good friend," he answered; "it is long since anything that she could do has had such an effect. I have known her thoroughly for some time; but that a man, my near relation, my pretended friend and old companion, should take part in bringing disgrace upon my name, and enter into such black schemes as these"—and he laid his hand

upon the letter—"does grieve and astonish me; does shake my confidence in human virtue and honour, and makes me doubt whether friendship is anything but a mere shadow, honesty but an idle name."

"No, my lord, no," cried the servant; "it all comes of your shutting your eyes to your cousin's behaviour, even from your boyhood. You thought everybody was prejudiced against him—that we hated him without cause; but, bless you, my good lord, we knew him from his youth, and had plenty of opportunities of seeing what you never saw. You great noblemen are, doubtless, clever and more learned than we are; but we poor people have got our eyes and can't help making use of them. I never saw Sir William do anything from a good motive; I never saw him do anything straightforwardly; I never heard of any act of kindness; and you may judge what we think, when we have watched for the whole of the last year, day and night I may say, for fear you should have a shot in the head, or a blade in the heart, that did not come from the hands of a fair enemy."

“No, no,” cried Algernon Grey, waving his hand, warmly; “there, at least, you do him wrong. Passion may mislead, but he is incapable of such acts as that; and, had he been so inclined, he has had plenty of opportunities.”

“Not so many as your lordship thinks,” answered Tony; “for there has been always some one near at hand. However, I think that is all nonsense too; for it seemed to me there was more to lose than to gain by killing you; but the other men would fancy it, and there is never any harm in being too careful. He will be in a fine fright when he finds the letter is gone; for I do not doubt that it dropped from him, although it was under your horse’s feet that the boy found it.”

“Give me some paper from that roll,” said Algernon Grey, “and the yellow wax there—Nay, it matters not. Here are persons coming—Begone now, my good friend; and remember, not one word of this to any other being, till I have myself well considered how to act.”

As he spoke Christian of Anhalt entered the tent, and the old servant bowed and retired.

CHAPTER II.

BEFORE daybreak, Algernon Grey was up and dressed; but, to say truth, it was no pain to him to rise, for he had not closed an eye all night, and was more weary of tossing to and fro on the sleepless couch, than if he had passed the hours by the side of a watch-fire. As soon as his buff coat had been cast on and looped, and his sword-belt thrown over his shoulders, he lighted his lamp, and read over again the letter that had been placed in his hands the night before. A smile of some bitterness came upon his countenance, and, folding it carefully up, he walked out of his tent, and, ascending the highest part of the hill, gazed over the scene below. The stars were growing somewhat faint in the heaven, but the diminution of their lustre was the only

sign yet visible of approaching day. All below was still. The wearied troops were sleeping by the nearly extinguished watch-fires; and the tread of a distant sentry, as he paced up and down, could just be heard, marking, rather than breaking, the silence. The murmur of the river, too, reached the ear, but with a stilly sound, full of repose and quiet. Folding his arms upon his breast, Algernon Grey continued to gaze, across the shadowy lines of tents and waggons, down into the valley below, where lay a light morning mist, giving a white gleam, soft and pleasant to the eye, and then he turned his look towards the heavens, and his lips murmured with prayer. A minute or two after, a faint grey streak was seen in the east: it then acquired an orange hue; and one or two light-grey clouds overhead began to glow with spots of a lurid red. Soon after, the orange turned to a fiery-crimson, and floods of rose-coloured rays came pouring over the sky; while the grey air between the tents was mingled with a dim mysterious purple. A solitary figure passing here and there was seen. The neighing of a horse broke the

silence. A dull hum gradually succeeded; then brisk and lively sounds. A drum beat in a distant part of the camp; and, just when the broad sun showed half his disc above the horizon, red and fiery, as if ominous of the bloody strife about to take place, the boom of a single cannon shook the air, and all became life and activity.

With a quick step, the young Englishman descended from the spot where he had been standing, paused for a moment or two, some twenty paces down the hill, and gazing out towards a distant point, shading his eyes with his hand; then resumed his course, and bent his steps direct towards the tent of William Lovet. He found one of his cousin's servants at the entrance; and, asking the man whether his master were up, was informed that he had just gone forth.

"There he goes, my lord, along that path," said the man, pointing still farther down the hill; and, instantly advancing with a quick step, Algernon Grey cut him off just as he reached a little open space, which divided the tents of the English and Scotch volunteers

from the ground occupied by a small party of Palatinate troops.

“Ah, Algernon!” exclaimed Lovet, turning round at the sound of a quick step; “is that you? I was going to seek you; for there is a rumour that Bavarian foragers are in sight.”

“I have seen them,” answered Algernon Grey, in a tone peculiarly calm and gentle; “at least I have seen what I consider to be reconnoitring parties of the enemy. A battle is, therefore, certain, ere the day be over; and as no one knows who may come out of this field alive, it is as well we should have a private word or two before we enter it.”

“Ah, my grave cousin,” cried Lovet, with a laugh, “are you preparing against the worst? Good faith! I never think it worth while to fancy that the ball has yet been cast which is destined to take my life.”

“Nor do I dwell upon such thoughts,” answered Algernon Grey; “but still there are particular events, my good cousin, which form epochs in the life of man, as others form epochs in the histories of states, and it is as well to take those moments to wind up old

accounts, and leave the coming time clear and free for a different course of action."

There was something peculiar, firm, almost stern, in Algernon Grey's tone, which struck William Lovet a good deal, for he had rarely heard that tone employed towards himself, and he knew well that it was an indication of his cousin's mind being strongly moved. Nevertheless he could not restrain his ordinary jesting spirit, or else he judged that light merriment was the best means of covering deeper thoughts. "On my life, Algernon," he said, "if you wish to wind up our accounts, I cannot agree, for I have not the ledger here. It is a large book and the roll of long standing—I do not carry it about me."

"I do," answered Algernon Grey; "there is the last item," and he put into his cousin's hand the letter which I have already laid before the reader.

William Lovet took it and opened it. The moment his eye fell upon the writing, in spite of habitual self-command, the colour slightly mounted into his cheek, and his lip turned somewhat white. The next instant, however

he looked up with a clear eye and a curling lip, saying, "You have read it?"

"Every word," answered Algernon Grey, calmly. "It was given to me as a paper belonging to myself, and I read it throughout: not finding a name which could lead me to the right owner, till the last few lines met my eye."

"It is a precious epistle," said Lovet, holding it with the coolest air imaginable, and then placing it in his pocket; "not quite so eloquent as one of St. Paul's—nor so edifying, cousin mine. But yet, she is a glorious creature, and, as you must have long perceived, I am over head and ears in love with her."

"I have not long perceived it," answered Algernon Grey, bitterly; "had I long perceived, William, my conduct might have been different.—You have mistaken me, sir. It would seem that you cannot comprehend straightforward conduct and direct dealing; for, had you done so, you would have told me all this when first we met after so long a parting. Instead of that, by crooked means and side-long instigations, you have been urging me to steps tending to the gratification of your own

wishes. I will not pause to recapitulate all those acts and words, the true meaning of which is now as clear to me as day. Suffice it, that you love this woman, or her great wealth, and that you have used every sort of artifice to induce me to take these steps, which must necessarily tend to the annulling of my incomplete marriage with herself—Is it not so?”

“Perfectly,” answered William Lovet, with the coolest possible assurance; “I have done so most deliberately and considerately; and I trust that you are duly grateful for it.—My dear Algernon, do not look so fierce. Recollect that I am not one on whom frowning brows have any effect; but listen to a little quiet reason; though, I must say, you are the most unreasonable man I ever met with. Now, if a poor man has an oyster in his hand and wants to eat the delicate fish, he must open it with whatever instrument happens to be nearest to him. Would you have him wait till he can go to a cutler’s, or an ironmonger’s, to buy himself an oyster-knife? If he has a dagger, he uses the dagger; if not, he takes a stone and hammers it open; if no stone is at hand,

he dashes it on the ground and breaks it so. Then must he wait for vinegar and pepper, a soft manchet-roll and a glass of sack? Oh, no, he scoops it out and swallows it whole, licks his lips, and thanks the gods for the good gift of oysters. Such is my case: I took the means nearest at hand to obtain my object, and, thinking it much better for your honour and credit, that you should be the person to decline the fulfilment of a contract passed upon you by a couple of grey-headed grandsires, than that the lady should curtsy low and say, I wont, I prompted you to all things that I thought conducive to your happiness, and, at the same time, to my little schemes.— But see what an ungrateful thing is man! Here you set yourself upon the pedestal of injured innocence, and look stout and stalwart, as if you would cut the throat of the man who has done you the greatest possible service.”

“Service!” exclaimed Algernon Grey. “Do you call this service?”

“To be sure,” answered Lovet, laughing. “A pretty life you would have led with this

fair lady. There, read her epistle over again ;” and he took it from his pocket. “ You cannot have perused it carefully. Not only would you have had a sweet and comfortable companion, full of matrimonial tenderness and domestic duty, but, possibly, a tranquil passage to another state, somewhat more speedy than the ordinary course of nature, unless you had a special taster of your food, and kept all sharp instruments under lock and key.”

“ And can you really dream of wedding such a thing as you describe ?” asked his cousin.

“ Oh, yes, as soon as she is wed-able,” answered William Lovet. “ I am a very fearless animal, fond of riding wild horses, and know, moreover, how to manage them ; but in this matter do as you like, kind cousin Algernon. Go back, if it so please you, and ratify your boy’s marriage. The lady will soon be a widow, I will warrant ; or, if you are wise, do as I have always urged you, take some step to break this boyish union—any step you please ; you will find her right ready to second your wishes ; and a little interest at court, a good

word to the bishops, and humble petition to the King will settle the matter in six weeks. However you may look upon it now, I shall expect your deep gratitude for all that I have done ; and when you are wedded to the lady that you love, and I to her I seek, we will each rule our household in different ways ; and we will meet at Christmastide and Easter, and, like a couple of pair of cooing doves, congratulate ourselves in soft murmurs on our separate happiness."

"My gratitude will be limited to the occasion, William," cried his cousin ; "for my part I never seek to see you more. I find that from the time I left my native land, you have been seeking to withhold, if not withdraw from me, the affections of one bound to me by ties she should have thought indissoluble."

"Affection that you never sought to cultivate yourself," said Lovet, tartly.

"I was bound, as you well know, by a solemn pledge not to return for five years," said Algernon Grey ; "but, at all events, it was not a cousin's part nor a friend's to strive to poison my domestic peace—nay, nor even to

put it in peril, for who can say whether this marriage can be dissolved?—let me speak out, for time wears,—if we both survive this battle, I beseech you return to England with all possible speed, tell your fair paramour, that I am aware of all, and that I will take instant means to do my best towards her kind wishes being gratified, that the contract between her and me shall come to an end; and, at the same time, entreat her to use all those keen measures which her shrewd wit can suggest, and her bold courage execute, to second my endeavours. Between you both, doubtless, you will find the matter easy. So farewell!”

He turned upon his heel, and walked a few steps away, but ere he had gone far, he heard Lovet’s voice exclaiming, “Algernon, Algernon!”

“Were you ever at a wedding,” asked his cousin coming up, as he paused, “where a harsh old father, taken in by a coaxing girl, gave his daughter away to the very man she loved?—have you not seen how she came back to kiss the dear old man’s hand, and seemed reluctant to go, and talked of the sweet

delights of her domestic home, and a world of canting tenderness taught men and women from their childhood, about infant joys and early pleasures; while, in her heart, she felt like a freed bird with the door of its cage just open?—Get you gone, my noble cousin! You are like this same bride; and, say what you will, this letter has taken a load of care from your shoulders; and, on my life! so much do I love you, that, had I known how balmy and peaceful would be its effects, I would have shown it to you long ago. There, take it and keep it as a tender memorial of your dear and devoted Catherine; and, whenever you think of her large, flashing black eyes, her Juno brow, and curling lip, read some passages from that tender epistle, and, falling down upon your knees, thank Heaven for having given you such a cousin as myself.”

“I will keep it,” said Algernon Grey, taking the letter from his hand; “but there is one thing, my good cousin, which, for your own sake, you should know. This is not the first intimation that I have had of my so-called wife’s infidelity to her engagements with me,

though it is the first, that you, my kinsman and companion, had a share in her breach of faith. Perhaps you do not understand my meaning; but you must be of a different wit from that I think, if you so softly believe the woman who would thus act towards me will treat you better."

"Oh, you speak of sundry small amours with which the sweet lady has consoled the weary hours of my long absence," answered Lovet, with his cheek a little heated; "that will be easily pardoned, and my presence will set all right again.—I am no jealous fool, Algernon, and can pardon a reasonable amount of coquetry in a lovely woman, left with no one to keep her thoughts from stagnating." And Lovet turning away with a laugh, took his way back to his own tent.

There are some minds unto which the discovery of baseness and treachery in those who have been trusted, is so painful as to counterbalance, and even more than counterbalance, any portion of relief and happiness that is sometimes obtained under the over-ruling hand of fate, from the very means employed

to thwart, to grieve, and to disappoint us. Such was the case with Algernon Grey in the present instance. It must not be denied that it was a relief to him to feel he had a reason, a motive, a just cause for striving, by every means, to annul a contract which had been entered into rather by his parents than himself, long ere he had the power of judging, or acting, on his own behalf; but yet the character of his cousin now stood before him in all its naked deformity; and it offered a painful subject of contemplation, which no prospect of happiness could banish.

He would fain have had a few moments for thought; and was turning his steps towards his own tent, when a large party of young men advancing towards him impeded his way, and the next moment the voice of the younger Prince of Anhalt calling him by name, made him turn towards the slope above. When he perceived that the Englishman heard him, he waved him up; and as soon as Algernon was by his side, he exclaimed, "Come hither, come hither, I have something to show you."

“ I think I know what you would say, my Prince ; I have already seen some parties in that wood towards Pilsen,” answered Algernon. “ They are Bavarians, I should think.”

“ Then the battle is certain,” said Christian of Anhalt. “ You will charge with me, will you not ? ”

“ Assuredly,” replied Algernon Grey ; “ but I think we had better communicate the news to your father, as there may be yet time, if we can get the men to work, to strengthen our position here a little.”

“ Come then, come,” said the young Prince ; “ he will be glad to see you. I told him half an hour ago of the news you brought last night from Prague ; and he said, ‘ God send the Queen have power enough to make her husband come ; but I doubt it.’—I doubt too, to tell you the truth, my friend ; and his presence at this moment were worth ten thousand men.—Will your cousin be of our band ? I saw you speaking with him just now.”

“ We spoke together for the last time, perhaps, in life,” answered Algernon Grey ; “ he

has done me wrong—has been doing so for years——”

“And you have found him out at length,” said Christian of Anhalt, interrupting him with a smile. “We have understood him better. There is not a man in the camp who would trust him.”

“And yet,” answered Algernon Grey, “he is a good soldier, and a brave man. You had better have him and his people with you.”

“Not I,” answered Christian of Anhalt. “True it is, my friend, we cannot unveil the bosoms of those who surround us, and see the thoughts and purposes within; but, on my life! were it possible, I would not take one man along with me, when I go to fall upon the enemy’s ranks, whose heart is not pure and high, whose thoughts and purposes as they lie open to the eye of God, might not lie open to the eye of man. And shall I have the company of one I know to be a villain? I always fancy that it is such men as this who bring the bullets most thick amongst us.”

Algernon Grey shook his head with a sigh, for he was well aware that in the wise but

mysterious ways of Heaven, the lead and the steel as often seek out the noble and the good as the mean and the wicked.

While they had been thus conversing, they had walked on towards the tent of the general, whom they found seated with several other officers taking a hasty meal. The intelligence they gave soon brought that meal to a conclusion ; and for several hours every effort was made to induce the men to strengthen the position of the Bohemian army on the hill. The spirit of insubordination, however, was too strong for authority. Some would not work at all, saying that they were soldiers and not grave-diggers. Some slunk away after having begun ; and none but a few English and Germans exerted themselves with anything like energy and perseverance.

Little, very little was effected ; and, in the mean while, news came from the various reconnoitring parties which had been thrown out, of the rapid approach of the Austrian and Bavarian army. Some had caught sight of one body, some of another ; but still the day wore on ere they appeared in sight ; and the

Prince of Hohenloe, and several others of the commanders, began to doubt that a battle would take place that day.

Old Christian of Anhalt shook his head; "Maximilian of Bavaria," he said, "will fight as soon as he comes up, depend upon it; he must either fight or starve; and one night to him is of more consequence than even to us."

All that the individual exertions of a man could effect, was done by the old Prince himself. He strove to the best of his power to array and encourage the forces. He told them that the King would be with them in an hour. He pointed to the walls and guns of Prague, and said, that with such support as that, with strong hands and brave hearts, they had no need to fear any army were it of ten times their own numbers. His countenance was gay and cheerful, as he rode from rank to rank, whatever doubts might be in his heart; but he failed in raising the spirits of the greater part of the troops; and by all, with the exception of the cavalry under the command of his son, he was listened to with dull

and heavy brows, and an aspect of doubt and uncertainty.

When he and his little train had reached the middle of the line, a horseman rode up to him from Prague, and spoke a few words in a low tone. The old man's cheek grew red ; and he muttered between his teeth ; " In the church ! Sin and death ! What does he in the church ? Why does he not pray here in the eye of the God of battles, and in the presence of his soldiers ? "

" I shall have to go and cut Scultetus's throat, to stop his long-winded preaching," said the Prince's son, who was close by.

" Hush," cried the old general ; and, raising his voice, he added in loud tone, " the King will be here immediately, my friends ; and under his eye you will fight for his crown and your own rights."

" The heads of the columns are appearing on the right, your Highness," said Algernon Grey, in a whisper.

" I am glad of it," answered Christian of Anhalt. " The sooner this is over, the better.—Some one ride down to those Hungarians ; tell

them to bend back upon the hill ; so far advanced, they show our flank to the enemy. Let their right rest upon yon little summer-house; it is quite far enough advanced. You go, Lenepp; and, riding on, he continued his exhortations to the men, every now and then sending off an officer with orders to one part or another of the line ; after having reached the end, he turned his horse, and, accompanied by the Prince of Hohenloe and the rest, rode up at a quick pace to the highest part on the hill, beckoning to the man who had brought him news from Prague to follow. His first attention was directed to the movements of the enemy, whose regiments were now gathering thick in the plain below.

A cloud of light troops, manœuvring hither and thither, almost as if in sport, concealed, in some degree, what was taking place in the main body of the army ; but the experienced eye of the old commander was not to be deceived ; and once or twice he murmured to himself, “ If he does that, and we are wise, he is ruined—We shall soon see—now, sir, what is going on in Prague?” and he turned to the

officer who had just arrived from the city :
“ Praying you say, and preaching too, I suppose. What more ? ”

“ Why, feasting, your Highness,” answered the young man, drily ; “ there is a great banquet prepared for the court after the morning service.

“ A banquet ! ” exclaimed the old Prince furiously ; “ God’s life ! who will there be to eat it ?—Yes, he will try to cross—No, he is coming farther on.—Praying, and preaching, and feasting, with fifty thousand men at the gates !—Has any one got a bible here ? ”

“ I have,” answered a young pale man, standing by on foot ; and he handed a small volume to the old commander.

“ Let me see,” continued Christian of Anhalt, “ this is the twenty-third Sunday after Trinity, is it not ? and the gospel is the twenty-second of St. Matthew ; let me see ; ” and he sought out the chapter he spoke of, and ran his eye over it in silence for a minute or two : “ Ah ! ” he said, at length, reading from the book ; “ ‘ Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s, and unto God the things that are

God's'—but, by my grey hair! here comes Cæsar to take them; ay, and to take more than his own too; so we must try and prevent him.—Now, my good cousin of Hohenloe, see if you can make out what Maximilian of Bavaria and that damned Walloon, Bucquoy, are doing.”

“Methinks they are going to attack the city on the other side,” answered the Prince of Hohenloe, who was in command of the troops which had been gathered on the Weissenberg during old Anhalt's retreat.

“No,” answered the other, “no; they are looking for a bridge. They will not show us their flank, depend upon it. That would be a greater fault than that which they are going to commit. Ride down to your men, Christian, my boy; wheel them a little upon their right, about the eighth of a circle; and be ready at a moment's notice. I will send down the Englishmen to you, when I see more.”

About a quarter of an hour passed, during which the movements of the enemy seemed wavering and uncertain; at the end of that time, however, clouds of skirmishers, Croats and Albanians, as they were called, began to

appear on the nearer side of the river. "It may yet be a feint," said Christian of Anhalt; "it may yet be a feint.—They are getting upon that swampy ground. Five minutes more and they cannot help themselves. By heavens! their columns are broken. What is Maximilian of Bavaria about?—he is trying to turn the march—The Austrians still come on—look, look, they are separating; they will never get their artillery over that little bridge!—Now, cousin of Hohenloe, now noble lords and gentlemen, the moment of victory is before us, if we choose to take it. In a quarter of an hour, the marsh, the stream, and a bridge of a span wide will be between Bucquoy and the Duke. Let us sweep down upon the Bavarian, who is already in confusion. We are more than double his numbers; he can receive no support from the Austrians; and if there be a thousand gallant men in our army, he is irretrievably ruined. The same movement brings us on the flank of Bucquoy; and he is between us and the guns of Prague.—I say, let us charge at once as one man, and the day is ours."

"But you do not consider, Anhalt," said the

Prince of Hohenloe, "that we should so lose the advantage of our position ; here, upon a high hill, they must climb to attack us, and undergo our whole fire as they advance."

"God of Heaven !" cried Christian of Anhalt.

"I think," said another general officer, close by, "that it would be a pity to give up the great advantage of this ground, which we have taken such pains to obtain."

"Besides," said another, "if we should be repulsed there, we lose the support of Prague, and are totally cut off from the city ; we should fight to a disadvantage, and have no place of retreat."

"If we could count upon the zeal and steadiness of our men," cried another, "I should join my voice to the Prince of Anhalt's ; but I very much doubt them. I believe that one-half would disperse ere we met the enemy."

The old commander sat upon his horse in silence, with his teeth set, and his bare hands clasped so tight together, that a part of the brown fingers became quite white. "You are losing the only opportunity of victory," he said, at length. "Nay, it is already lost. The Ba-

varians have turned the marsh ; the Austrians are passing the bridge. Ere we could reach them, they will be once more united. Now, nought is to be thought of, but to make as good a fight here as we can. You, Hohenloe, take the left ; I command upon the right. Let our artillery open their fire upon the enemy now. We may do something to break them as they advance. Let us each to our post ; and, in God's name, do our best!"

Thus saying, he turned his horse to ride away ; but, after having gone some twenty or thirty yards, he called up one of his train, and said in a low voice, " Ride to the commanders of regiments, and tell them in private, that in case of a disaster, which God forefend, they are to rally their men upon Brandeis. The campaign is not at an end, though a battle may be lost ; and, if Prague does its duty, with the help of Mansfeld, we may still defeat the enemy, and save the crown—Here, my young friend," he continued, beckoning to Algernon Grey, " go to, my son and tell him to ply back to his former ground with the cavalry. Let him know that I have been overruled ; and,

therefore, that movement was vain. He will now, as far as I see, have the Bavarian cavalry in front. We must try early what a charge upon them will do ; but bid him, if successful, not to pursue too far, but turn upon the flank of the infantry and charge again. I will send him an order when it is time."

Thus saying, he proceeded on his way ; and Algernon Grey, galloping down to the cavalry under the younger Prince Christian, delivered his father's message.

"See what it is to join fools with wise men," said young Christian of Anhalt, in a low bitter tone. "They have ruined us."

"Indubitably," answered Algernon Grey ; "and the same timid spirit, if it acts here, will render the battle but a short one. I will just give some orders to my people, in case of the worst, and then take my place ; for they are coming on fast."

Thus saying, he turned his horse and cantered quickly round to a spot just over the brow of the hill, where the baggage had been collected and left under the charge of the ordinary servants of the officers, with a small

guard. "Here, Frill," he cried, as soon as he could find his own people, "tell the men to keep the horses saddled, and the lighter baggage charged; let them lead the grey and the roan down towards the gate of the town, with one of the sumpter-horses, and have the barb brought up behind that tree, in case this should be killed. Keep yourself just over the edge of the hill, to be out of the fire. There is no use of risking your life, my poor boy."

"I should like to see the battle, my lord," said the lad; "no harm happened to me at Rakonitz, though I had my beaver shot through."

"Nonsense," answered his master; "do as I have ordered, and let me not see you above the hill. You have money with you, I think, in case of need?"

The boy answered in the affirmative, and Algernon Grey, turning his horse, rode back to the cavalry under Prince Christian of Anhalt, and took his place at the head of his own men. The Austrians were by this time within three hundred yards of the foot of the hill, upon the troops, ranged along the edge of which

their artillery was playing with very little effect. The guns of the Bohemian army, however, though only ten in number, were better placed and better served; and at the moment when Algernon Grey returned to the scene of the commencing strife, the balls from a battery of four large pieces were ploughing through the ranks of a strong body of the enemy's cavalry just in front, creating tremendous confusion and disarray. He had not been three minutes with his troop, when, looking to the right, he saw a German officer galloping furiously along towards the young Prince of Anhalt, and seeming to call aloud to him as he advanced, though the roar of the artillery prevented his words from being heard. The next moment, however, the young Prince waved his sword high in the air, and shouted "Charge!" The word passed along from mouth to mouth; and at once the spurs were driven into the horses' sides; the animals sprang forward; and down the slope of the hill, the whole of the cavalry of the left was hurled like a thunderbolt upon the right wing of the enemy. Everything gave way before them.

Men and horses rolled over in the shock ; the standard of the Walloons fell ; the cavalry was driven back upon the infantry ; the infantry was thrown into confusion. A force of Austrian horse, brought up to the support of the Walloons, was broken in a moment ; and in that part of the field, for some ten or fifteen minutes, the victory was decided in favour of the Bohemians ; but, when all seemed favourable, a thin hard-featured man, riding upon a black horse, wheeled a large body of Bavarian pike-men, supported by a regiment of arquebussiers, upon the young Prince's triumphant cavalry. A fierce volley of small arms instantly followed, as Christian of Anhalt was plunging his horse among the pikes ; and the young leader fell at once almost at the feet of Tilly. Algernon Grey's horse went down at the same instant, but, starting up, he endeavoured to drag his friend from amongst the pikes, receiving a slight wound in the shoulder while so doing ; and, as the blow forced him to let go his hold for a moment, two strong Bavarians grasped the Prince by the bucklings of the cuirass and dragged him within the line. Another strove

to seize the young Englishman ; but striking him fiercely over the head with his sword, Algernon freed himself from his grasp, and springing back, caught a masterless horse that was running near, and vaulted into the saddle.

The trumpets of the Bohemian cavalry were sounding a retreat ; and spurring after them with two of his own men, who had hastened to his aid, Algernon Grey reascended the hill, and rallied his troop into something like order. All the rest of the field, however, was one wild scene of confusion. Clouds of smoke and dust rolled between the various masses of the army, hardly permitting the eye to distinguish which bodies were keeping their ground, which were flying ; but one thing was clear ; the enemy were advancing steadily up the hill ; and the Bavarian cavalry rallied, and in good order, outflanking the Bohemian line, were preparing to charge their lately victorious foes. The German infantry, towards the centre of the Bohemian line, seemed firm enough ; but the Transylvanians, who had been seen upon the right at the commencement of the fight, were

no longer to be perceived ; and regiment after regiment of the Austrian troops pouring on in that direction, showed that the ground there was clear of opposition.

“ My lord, my lord,” said a youthful voice, as Algernon Grey was gazing around him, “ the day is lost. All the savages have fled ; and the whole right is in confusion and disarray ; the men scampering hither and thither, and drowning themselves in the Moldau.”

“ Go back, go back to the place I told you,” replied Algernon ; “ wait there for me ; but tell the men to get all the baggage as near the gate as they can.—My lord, the count,” he continued, riding up to an old officer, who was advancing, “ one more charge for the honour of our arms.”

“ With all my heart,” said old Count Schlick ; “ where’s the boy, Christian ? He did that charge right gallantly.”

“ He is wounded and taken, my lord,” answered Algernon Grey.

“ Then I will head the men,” said the Count ; “ they will follow grey hair as well as brown, I will warrant—Let us away.”

Riding on to the body of cavalry which had rallied, the old Bohemian nobleman put himself at their head ; the word was given to charge ; and once more, though with less spirit and in diminished numbers, they swept down to meet the advancing enemy. The right of their horse encountering a body of Walloon cavalry, forced them to recoil ; and there the Bohemian horsemen were soon mingled with the foe hand to hand. But on the left they found their advance opposed by a steady regiment of Bavarian pikemen, flanked as before by arquebussiers. The first line hesitated, and drew in the rein at the sight of the forest of pikes before them. A discharge of musketry took them in the flank, and in an instant all was confusion, disarray, and flight. About four hundred horse, with the old Count and Algernon Grey, were left in the midst of the imperial army, no longer united as a single mass, but broken into small parties of combatants ; and it soon became evident that the strife could not be maintained any longer.

“ Away, away ! ” cried the Count, riding past the young Englishman ; “ I have ordered the

trumpets to sound a retreat,—but, in Heaven's name, let us save our standard."

As he spoke, he pointed to a spot where a banner was floating still, in the midst of a large party of the enemy ; and gathering together as many of his own men as he could, Algernon Grey made a charge with the old Bohemian at his side, in order, if possible, to recover it. But the effort was in vain ; as they poured down upon the enemy, a pistol shot struck the standard-bearer from his horse, and closing round the little troop of English and Bohemians, the Walloons soon brought many a brave heart to the ground. Algernon Grey thought of Agnes Herbert : there was nothing but death or captivity if he staid to strike another stroke ; all was evidently lost ; no object was to be obtained, and, turning his horse, he cleared the way with his sword, and galloped up the hill, passing under a furious fire from the musketeers, who were already in his rear.

When he reached the summit, he perceived how vain had been even the last effort. Cavalry and infantry of the Bohemian army were

all flying together. The field presented a complete rout, except where, at various points, appeared an Austrian or Bavarian regiment, already in possession of the hill. The artillery, the greater part of the baggage, and all the tents, were in the hands of the enemy; and, spurring on like lightning through the perils that surrounded him, the young Englishman at length reached the tree where the page was waiting, with his own horse and a fresh one for his master. Springing to the ground, Algernon snatched his pistols from the saddle-bow, and leaped upon the back of the other charger.

“Mount and follow, mount and follow,” he cried to the page, and then dashed on towards the gates of Prague.

As he approached, he looked eagerly round for his servants and baggage, at the spot where he had appointed them to be; but they were not to be seen; though, as compared with the rest of the field, the ground and the road in front of the gates were nearly solitary; for the stream of fugitives had taken another direction. As he gazed forward, however, he

saw some of the soldiers of the tower in the very act of unlocking the chain of the portcullis; and judging rightly what was about to take place, he struck his spurs into his horse's sides and dashed over the drawbridge. A guard presented a partisan to his breast, calling, "Stand back! We have orders—"

But Algernon Grey turned the weapon aside with his sword; the horse in its furious career dashed the man to the ground; and ere any one else could oppose, the young cavalier and the page were both within the walls of Prague.

CHAPTER III.

IN the fine old Dom church of Prague, sat Frederic, king of Bohemia, and many of the principal personages of his court. The faint sunshine of a cold November day shone through the tall windows, and one of the pale chilly beams lighted on the bald head and white hair of an old man raised above the rest in a high pulpit, who, with outstretched arm and vehement gesticulation, was declaiming violently against "the woman of the seven hills, and all who bore about with them the mark of the Beast." His piety, indeed, was somewhat blasphemous, and his illustrations exaggerated in character and homely in language, till they became almost ludicrous; but still there was a fierce, rude

eloquence about him, which captivated his hearers and enchained their attention. Every eye was turned towards him, every ear was bent to hear, when suddenly a dull heavy sound shook the building, and made the casements rattle in their frames.

The preacher paused; the congregation turned round and gazed in each other's faces; and then, roar after roar, came the peal of the artillery from the field where all Frederic's hopes were to find their final overthrow.

The young monarch started up with a look of consternation; the congregation followed; and all seemed taken by surprise, and thunderstruck at an event which might have been foreseen by themselves, and had been foreseen by others for weeks before. But there are states of moral apathy—lethargies as it were of the mind, which seem sent by fate to prevent the near impending destruction from giving to the doomed a warning to fly from its approach. Remonstrances had often reached Frederic's ear; urgent appeals had been made to his judgment; every intelligence of the enemy's movements had

been communicated to him—but, sunk in listless idleness, or carried away by the pursuit of pleasure, or wrapt in the visions of a fanatical religion, he would not listen, or he would not believe, till the cannon of the field of Prague roused him thus at once in horror and wonder from the long torpor in which he had lain.

The battle had begun, and he was absent; his subjects and his friends were shedding their blood in his defence, and he was not there to share their peril and direct their efforts. But it was still not too late, he thought. He would fly to the field; he would encourage his soldiers by his presence; he would put himself in the front of his host; he would perish or preserve the crown he had gained. He hearkened not to the preacher, though Scultetus in a loud voice called on all to wait and listen to a concluding prayer. He heard not the eager but reasonless questions of his surrounding courtiers; he did not even mark the pale face of Camerarius; but, waving his right hand, and grasping his sword scabbard with the left, he exclaimed aloud, “To the field! To the field! Our friends

and brethren are dying in arms in our cause !
To the field ! To the field ; and God defend
the right !”

Thus saying, he strode at once out of the church, and hurried back towards the palace, calling loudly for his horse. A page ran on to bring out a charger ; and many others followed, in search of arms, they said ; but few were ever seen again by the young monarch’s side.

“ Where is my horse ?” cried Frederic vehemently, as he reached the gates of his residence ; “ quick, quick ! Lose not an instant. Tell the Queen I have gone to lead the troops ; tell her—”

“ Which horse will your Majesty ride ?” demanded an officer of the stables, running forth.

“ Any one, fool !” exclaimed the King—
“ hear you not the cannon ?—Aught which will carry me to my friends without.—Away ! Stay not to talk !—Have it here in a moment !”

“ Will you not arm, sire ?” said an old officer, in a persuasive tone.

“ No !” cried Frederic, sternly ; “ as I am,

with my bare breast, will I face them. Speed is the only armour I would use.—But these men will drive me mad.—Where is my charger?—In the name of pity—in the name of Heaven, see some one what they are doing! Men will call me coward—my name will be a by-word. They will say, for centuries to come, that, while his brave soldiers were bleeding before Prague, Frederic of Bohemia shunned the field where his crown was to be lost or won.”

“ Here comes your royal charger,” cried a voice ; and, springing forward, the monarch put his foot in the stirrup and vaulted on the horse’s back.

“ Follow, follow! All that love me follow !” he cried, and without waiting for any one, dashed down at headlong speed towards the gates. The way was long, the streets narrow and steep; but on, on went the unhappy prince till the small triangular space of open ground before the inner ward lay within sight. Then ran up a half-armed guard ; and, approaching close to his horse’s side, said in a low voice, “ They fly, they fly, your Majesty !”

His look, his tone, were ominous; for he spoke as if he were afraid that his words might be heard by any one near; but still Frederic asked with a sinking heart, "Who fly?"

"Our men, sire," answered the soldier.

"Then I go to rally them," cried the King, "or to die with those who stand."

"That might have done an hour ago," said the soldier, bluntly; "but it is now too late."

It is the fate of misfortune to hear hard truths; and this was the first bitter sting of many that Frederic was yet to feel. He stopped not to answer, however, but pushed on past the man, catching a sight at the same time of several of his attendants spurring down after him. The soldiers of the guard-house scarcely saw his approach; for they were all gazing eagerly forth from the outer gate; but, just beyond the drawbridge, he perceived a rude Bohemian bleeding from several wounds, and leaning for support against the masonry.

"Ah, sir, the day is lost," cried the man, as the monarch rode past; "the troops are all flying towards Brandeis; half the Hungarians

drowned in the river; the infantry all in route; the cannon taken——.” Frederic listened to no more, but still spurred on, dashing his horse through the guards at the outer gate, and gazing eagerly towards the hill.

Who was it coming so rapidly towards him, followed by half a dozen troopers and a single banner? Old Christian of Anhalt, bloody and dusty from the fight, where he had fought hand to hand; no hat upon his head, his grey hair streaming in the wind, his head bent sadly down almost to his horse’s neck, and his hands grasping tightly the reins with a bitter and convulsive clasp.

“Anhalt!” cried the King.

“It is all lost, my lord, as I knew it would be,” said the old soldier, in a low deep voice. “Back with us into Prague as fast as may be. The Bavarian is at our heels.—Let the walls be well manned, and the cannon pour forth their shot upon the enemy, if they come too near. Let the gates be closed, too; the fugitives are taking another way.—Your safety and the defence of Prague are now all we have to think

of. We must have counsel with all speed.—You, gentlemen,” he continued, turning to those who followed, “away to the Rath-house in the old town, as fast as you can ride; take measures with the magistrates for the sure guarding of the walls; and, hark you, Dillingen, gather every information you can of the temper of the people, and let the King hear at the Hradschin. You will find me there, in case of need.—Come, my lord, come; it is vain thinking of what cannot be remedied. The future, the future! still the future! We may make a good fight yet, if Mansfeld will but help—Not serve under me! Why, I will be his horseboy, if he will fight like a man.—Come, my lord.—Nay, nay, be not so cast down! ’Tis but a battle lost after all. I trust we shall see many such before we die, and win many a one to boot;” and grasping Frederic’s hand kindly, he led, rather than followed, the Monarch back into the city, giving orders, as they passed the gates, that they should be closed and defended.

The news had already spread through Prague that the royal army had been defeated. There

were men who had seen the rout from a church steeple; the tale had been carried from mouth to mouth, and from house to house; there was scarce a babbling child who did not know it, and repeat it; and, as Frederic and his train passed by, almost every door had its group of men and women, who eyed him, some sadly, some sullenly—but few, if any, showed a mark of reverence. Some, especially where there was a cross over the door, suffered a half-suppressed grin to appear, as the unfortunate Prince rode by; and then went and talked in low tones to their neighbours, pointing significantly over the shoulder to the royal group. All that he saw made the young Monarch's heart more sad; and, when he reached the palace, he led the way straight to the ante-room of his wife's apartments.

The first person whom he met there was Agnes Herbert; but she saw that disaster and ruin were in his eyes, and she dared not ask any questions. Not a servant had been found in the court, or on the staircase, or in the hall below; and Frederic, turning to her, said in a

sad but gentle tone, "I beseech you, lady, seek some of the people, and tell them to send us what counsellors they can find ; above all, Dohna and Camerarius."

"Camerarius!" cried Christian of Anhalt, warmly; "we want counsel with men, not with weak and doubting subtle-wits like that.—Give us the Princess and Dohna.—Old Slick, I fancy, is dead; for I saw him charge desperately to rescue my poor boy, who is wounded and taken, I hear."

"Well, well," said Frederick; "send some one for Dohna, dear lady; and I will call the Queen.—Is your gallant son a prisoner, then, indeed?" he continued, grasping old Anhalt's hand.

"Never mind him," replied the soldier. "God will take care of him.—Let us have the Queen, my lord. Her courage and her wisdom now are worth a dozen other counsellors."

In the mean while, Agnes left the ante-room with her cheek deadly pale, and her heart feeling as cold as ice. There was a question she

would fain have asked, but she dared not breathe it—a question which made her bosom feel heavy and her limbs shake, even when she put it to herself, “Where was Algernon Grey?” Oh, when she thought of him in that hour, how deep, how strong, how overpowering did she feel the love which she had so long concealed from her own eyes. She grasped the balustrade of the staircase for support; and, though she knew that each moment was precious, she paused at every step.—Had she gone forward, she would have fallen.

Suddenly, as she descended, she heard a clang as of an armed man springing to the ground at the door of the second court, which opened below. Then came a step in the stone hall at the foot of the stairs. Oh, how her heart beat; for the quick sure ear of love recognised the tread at once. She darted down the remaining steps. The next instant he was before her. She sprang forward, and, ere they knew what they did, she was clasped to his armed bosom.

“I have come to keep my promise, dearest,”

said Algernon Grey; "to aid, to protect, to defend you with my life, if need should be.— Where is the Queen? where is the King? I must speak with them both, if possible."

"The King is above," answered Agnes, withdrawing herself from his embrace. "He is with the Prince of Anhalt in the Queen's ante-room, just above the court of St. George. He sent me for one of the attendants to call the Viscount of Dohna; but I can find no one.— Good Heaven! they surely cannot all have abandoned their King and their master already!"

"No, no," answered Algernon Grey; "they have gone up to the roofs to see what they can see, or out to gather news. Speed back again, dear Agnes, and tell him I am here. I will seek Dohna, if he lodges where he used. At all events, I will find some one who can call him. Away, dear girl, for I would fain see the King speedily."

Agnes hurried away, with her heart all joyful; for the relief of his coming had swept away the bitterness of all other disasters with that which he had anticipated. What was to

her a battle lost, if Algernon Grey was safe ! When she entered the ante-chamber she found the Queen seated between her husband and Christian of Anhalt ; her face raised and turned alternately from one to the other ; her look eager and grave, but not at all depressed.

“ ’Tis the best way,” she said, as Agnes entered ; “ so shall we, at least, gain time for intelligence, for preparation, and for action.—Doubtless he will grant it. He is our cousin.”

“ And his troops have had enough to do,” answered Christian of Anhalt ; “ that is the best security. He has as much need of repose as we have. Prague is a hard bone to pick.”

“ But whom shall we send ?” said Frederic. “ It must be some man of rank ; and there is an old grudge between him and Dohna. Is the Viscount coming, fair lady ?”

“ I can find none of the attendants, your Majesty,” answered Agnes ; “ but I met Master Algernon Grey in the hall, just alighted, and he undertook to find the Viscount, begging me to tell your Majesties that he wished to speak with you immediately.”

“Then he is safe,” cried the Queen; “thank God for that!”

“If he is safe, it is not his own fault,” exclaimed Christian of Anhalt, “for he fought like a madman when all hope was over. I never saw so cool a head in counsel, and so hot a one in battle. Let us have him here by all means.”

“Can we not send the Earl, Frederic?” asked the Queen, laying her hand gently on her husband’s arm, and calling him, in the hour of his distress, by the dear familiar name which she never used but in private. “He must throw off this foolish incognito now, and will go, I am sure, in his own name and character, as our envoy to this proud victor. See for him, my sweet cousin, see for him, and bring him hither with all speed.”

Agnes hastened away without reply, and found Algernon Grey already mounting the stairs. He followed her quickly, without even pausing for the words of tenderness which were in his heart; and in a moment after he stood before the King and Queen, who were

still nearly in the same position in which Agnes had left them, only that Elizabeth was writing with a rapid hand from her husband's dictation.

"Say four and twenty hours, my lord the King," exclaimed Christian of Anhalt, interrupting him; "he won't grant more, if so much."

"Well, four and twenty hours be it," answered Frederic. "We can gather force enough in that time to make head."

Elizabeth finished writing quickly, and then pushed the paper over to her husband, who took the pen and signed his name.

"This fair lady tells me you wish to speak with me, my lord," said Frederic, as soon as he had done.

"I wish to represent to your Majesty," replied Algernon Grey, "that the gates of the city being closed so soon, before any parties of the enemy are near, may prevent many gallant men, who have already fought well and will do so again, from finding refuge within these walls, where they might do good service. I

myself was nearly excluded; and much of the baggage will, doubtless, be lost which might be saved."

"It was an order given by me in haste, my young friend," replied Christian of Anhalt, "not rightly understood by the frightened people there, and to be amended immediately. I meant them to shut out our enemies, not our friends. But now listen to what his Majesty has to say to you."

"It is simply this, my Lord of Hillingdon," said Frederic; "Will you, in a moment of our need like this, take a flag of truce, from the gates to our cousin, Maximilian of Bavaria, and deliver to him this letter, demanding a suspension of arms for four and twenty hours?—You must go in your own character, however; for we cannot send any inferior man to such a Prince in the hour of victory."

"I will be your Majesty's envoy with pleasure," answered Algernon Grey, "and for this night will resume my name and title; but I will beg all here to forget it afterwards, as, for reasons of my own, now more strong than

ever, I wish not to have my coming and going bruited about in every part of Europe."

"Be it as you will," answered Frederic ;
"and many thanks, my lord, for this and all other services. Write on the superscription, dearest lady, 'By the hands of our cousin, the Earl of Hillingdon?'"

Elizabeth wrote, gave Algernon Grey the letter, and raised her eyes to his face, saying, "On your return, whatever be the answer you bring, I must see you for a few moments, my lord. You made me a promise, which I am sure you will fulfil with chivalry and devotion."

"I did not forget it, your Majesty," answered Algernon Grey, looking round with a faint smile towards Agnes ; "and I will return to accomplish it as soon as this task is ended. I shall, doubtless, find a flag at the gates ; and so I take my leave."

"Stay, I go with you to give better orders," said Christian of Anhalt, "and to furnish a new pass word to the guards, for I have some fears of these good citizens. Ha ! here comes Dohna—I will return immediately;" and thus saying he withdrew with Algernon Grey.

CHAPTER IV.

ALL was confusion and disorder in the streets of Kleinseite (or smaller side) of the city of Prague, as old Christian of Anhalt returned from the gates. The lower classes of citizens were hurrying hither and thither, or—collected into crowds wherever a more open space was to be found—were eagerly and vociferously discussing past events and future contingencies. Lowering brows, angry looks, and vehement gestures were seen everywhere; but no one ventured in any way to insult the old commander as he rode along; for not alone did his frank and straightforward bearing and gallant conduct in the field, command respect, but at the gates of the town he had found some thirty

or forty cavaliers who, amongst the last to quit the field, had sought shelter under the guns of the fortress, and now accompanied him on his way to the palace. There, all the servants and domestic officers of the King were found once more reassembled, and affecting to perform their several duties, but the scared look, the eager haste; the abstracted manner, all showed consternation; and on mounting to the apartments of the Queen, the Prince found that terror was not confined to the inferior inhabitants of the residence.

A number of Frederic's counsellors had by this time assembled, and, with the exception of Dohna, each seemed more terrified than his neighbour. Neither the presence of their sovereign, the importance of calm discussion, nor even the heroic courage displayed by the Queen herself, could restrain them from talking all at once. Some urged instant flight, some unconditional surrender; and the boldest of them only ventured to suggest an attempt to gain time by cunning negotiations with the enemy. Frederic himself was tranquil and resolute in

his air and tone; but in opinion he seemed wavering and uncertain.

The authority of the old soldier, his plain rough speech, sound sense, and stern firmness in the hour of danger, made some impression; but Christian of Anhalt soon saw that, as usual with the weak and crafty, where stratagem is out of time and presence of mind does not exist, the greater part of those present were still confusing counsel with vain speculations, with idle repetitions, and suggestions utterly inapplicable to the circumstances of the moment.

“We must get rid of these men, your Majesty,” he said, drawing Frederic aside; “half of them are cowards, and almost all the rest are fools, only fit for the monkey tricks of diplomacy. We want men of energy and action. Let us keep Dohna, as a skilful and firm counsellor, and send for young Thurm. Where his father is, I know not. I saw him very late in the field.”

“He is at his own house,” said Frederic; “he sent word he would dine, and then come hither.”

"'Tis so like him!" cried Anhalt; "he has fought himself into an appetite. But have I your permission to send these men away?"

"Yes, but courteously, my friend, courteously," replied Frederic.

"Oh, courteously, of course," answered the old man, with a grim smile. "Gentlemen," he continued, "an envoy has been sent to the enemy's head quarters. In less than an hour we shall hear more, and till then can decide upon nothing. It may be that we shall have to quit Prague to-morrow; so I would advise all—as every man has some private papers, and most men some little property—to employ the next few minutes in preparing for whatever may be the result. His Majesty will excuse your attendance for an hour—Stay, Dohna, stay!" he added in a low voice, "we shall want you. We are going to send for the two Thurms, and have calm counsel, instead of frightened babble."

The other counsellors hastened away, eager to save their papers and effects; and the moment they were gone a messenger was de-

spatched to old Count Thurm and his son Count Bernhard; but ere he had quitted the room two minutes, there was heard a knock at the door, and the younger count entered in haste with the Baron of Dillinghen, who had been sent to the town hall.

“What is it, gentlemen?” exclaimed the Queen, as soon as she saw them; “there is alarm in both your faces. Has any new disaster happened?”

“No, madam,” replied the young count; “but Dillinghen has some news of importance, which I fear I must confirm.”

“Speak! speak!” cried Frederic, turning to the baron. “What tidings bring you, sir?—Is the enemy advancing?”

“No, sire,” answered the Baron of Dillinghen; “but my lord of Anhalt here bade me collect what tidings I could of the temper of the people and the magistrates. I grieve to say it is not good. They show no willingness to defend the lower town,—declare it is untenable, and there is much murmuring amongst them at the very thought.”

“What is to be done?” cried Frederic, turning to the Prince of Anhalt with a look of consternation.

“Go up to the Wyschehrad,” answered Anhalt; “we can make it good for a long while, till we are able to draw men enough together to overawe these burghers and take the defence out of their hands.”

“My lord, I fear they are not to be overawed,” rejoined Dillinghen; “in a word, there is treason amongst them.”

“Ay, and even in your Majesty’s very court and palace,” added Bernhard of Thurm.

“That I know,” answered Frederic, in a sad and bitter tone; “do you recollect, Elizabeth, my letter from Rakonitz?—But still I thought the citizens were true.”

“So far from it, sire,” said Bernhard of Thurm, “and so pressing is the danger, that I was bold enough, ere I came up, to order the Queen’s carriage to be made ready with all speed. When you are both safe on the other side of the water, where I can rely upon my garrison, these turbulent burghers may be

brought to reason. Now I would lose no time, but depart instantly.—Your attendants can follow, with everything that it may be necessary to bring from the palace.—I would not lose a moment, for to know that you are in their power gives the traitors a bold front.”

“I must take some of my poor girls with me,” cried Elizabeth,—“poor Ann Dudley, and Amelia of Solms, and my sweet Agnes; but I will be back directly.”

As the Queen opened the door to retire into her bed-chamber, a voice of bitter lamentation was heard from within; and Christian of Anhalt exclaimed, “Would to God that these women would learn a lesson of fortitude from their high-souled mistress. What will howling do, to avert peril?”

“Be not harsh, my friend,” said Frederic; “that is poor Ann Dudley’s voice. Her husband’s body lies on that bloody field without. The tidings came just ere you returned. But here is the Queen again. Now let us go. I will send orders afterwards for all that may be needed. Come, sweet friend—methinks, with

you beside me, I can never know despair ;” and taking Elizabeth’s hand, he drew it through his arm and led her down slowly : for she was great with child.

The splendid carriage of blue velvet embroidered with silver stood ready in the court ; and, as Elizabeth’s eyes fell upon its gorgeous decorations, a faint sad smile came upon her lip, and she shook her head mournfully. Oh, how the emptiness of pomp and pageantry, and lordly state, is felt by the heart in the bitter hour of sorrow and adversity ; and while the riches of the soul, the love, the friendship, the trust, the tenderness, rise high in value, sink low the more sordid objects of earthly ambition and pride.

A weeping train followed the Queen to the carriage ; some entered with her ; some followed in other vehicles, or on foot ; and but two, of all the fair and sparkling bevy which had shared Elizabeth’s days of joy and splendour, seemed now in a condition to give her comfort and support. Amelia of Solms was sad, but she wept not ; Agnes Herbert grave, but firm, though gentle, in her whole demeanour. With

kindly care, she whispered from time to time some word of consolation in the ear of poor Ann Dudley, and, though her beautiful eyes were full of melancholy when she gazed at the Queen, yet there was a hopefulness in her words which added to the strength of mind with which Elizabeth bore up under the griefs and perils of the hour.

It seemed a long and weary way to the old citadel of Prague, as with slow steps the horses dragged the carriages up the ascent; but the gates at length were reached, and Frederic took his fair wife in his arms and carried her into the wide hall. He could not forbear saying with a sigh, "I now know where I am. Princes seldom learn the truth till they are taught it by adversity."

An hour went by; and many a messenger came up from the lower town, each burdened with gloomy tidings. The horses and carriages were all brought up from the stables of the Hradschin, and some small sums of money, together with clothes, and papers; but it was soon found that the council of citizens had taken possession of

the building ; and though they did not exactly prevent the King's servants from removing his own property, yet there were questions asked and objections made, which rendered the task slow and difficult. Night fell, and the confusion in the town increased. The light of numerous torches created a glare which was seen red and portentous from the Wyschehrad ; and a loud murmur like the roar of a distant sea rose up and filled the watching hearts above with vague and gloomy apprehensions.

Old Count Thurm had speedily joined the royal party, and a number of devoted friends surrounded Frederic and his Queen ; but those who knew the Bohemian capital best did not contribute, by their warnings, to raise hopes or to still anxieties.

They represented the probability of tumult and violence as great ; and all seemed convinced that treason had long been preparing the way for the state of mind the people now displayed.

At length loud but distant shouts, and then the sounds of horses' feet clattering quickly over the paved road, were heard ; and in a few

minutes Algernon Grey was introduced into the chamber where the King and Queen were seated, surrounded by most of those who had accompanied them to the citadel.

“What are those shouts, my lord?” was Frederic’s first question.

“I trust good auguries, your Majesty,” replied the young Englishman; “the crowds surrounded me and my people as I returned, calling out loudly for the tidings I bore. I answered briefly, that a truce was concluded to negotiate a peace. Those who understood German translated it to the rest; and then they tossed up their hats and shouted joyfully. So I trust that they will now return to their own homes; for they seemed in a sadly disturbed state.—There, my lord the King, is the convention signed by the Elector and Bucquoy. It was all that by any arguments I could obtain, though I disputed with them for an hour.”

“But eight hours suspension of arms!” exclaimed Frederic, looking at the paper, and then gazing at Christian of Anhalt, and at Thurm. Our decision must be made speedily.”

“If we were but sure of Mansfeld,” said Anhalt, thoughtfully, “and had but two thousand men more within the walls.”

“It is vain, old friend,” cried Count Thurm. “I know these people better than any one; and I take upon myself to say to the King—Fly at once. Lose not the precious moments. There are traitors in town, and court, and army. The people are not with us; we have no force to hold out; no hope of succour. You have eight hours, my lord, to save yourself from worse than perhaps you dream of; and, what is far more, to save this dear lady, our Queen. Lose not an instant; but go!”

“It were well, my royal friend,” said Christian of Anhalt. “Had we the people with us; had we troops to secure the place without their aid; could we even rally the remains of the army within Prague, I would say, ‘Stay; fight it out here to the last; and play the game to an end, however desperate.’ But all things at this moment are against us. The only thing in our power is eight hours of time. I see nought to which they can be

applied, but to your speedy escape. If you stay, with an army of fifty thousand men at your gates, with a turbulent and discontented population within, with a force not sufficient to man the whole walls, with provisions that will not last ten days, and not ammunition enough to resist a regular siege, a thousand to one the population throw open the gates to-morrow, and deliver you as a prisoner into the hands of the enemy."

"That, too, with the ban of the empire hanging over your head," cried Count Thurm; "and two inveterate enemies ready to execute it."

"Let us go," cried Elizabeth, rising from the table. "It can never be said that I have been the advocate of weak counsels; but now, like the willow, our strength may lie in yielding. Let us not hesitate any longer. In half an hour, I shall be ready. We shall gain seven hours, at least, upon the enemy; and, surely, that will place us in security."

"Madam," said young Bernhard of Thurm, "by your good leave, you shall have some

longer space. My lord the King has made me governor of this citadel. I have five hundred men in whom I can trust. With them I will undertake to hold it out for three full days against false Maximilian of Bavaria and his fifty thousand. This Jesuit-soldier shall find work enough beneath these walls to keep him for that time, at least, from pursuing the kinsman he has betrayed, and to make him recollect, perhaps, the promises he has violated."

"Never!" cried Elizabeth, warmly, taking the young man's hand in hers; "I will have no such sacrifice. Never shall the son of our best friend hazard his life to cover my flight. Nor even would I expose this city, fickle as it has proved itself, to the outrages of a furious enemy for such a consideration as my poor safety. Rather let me perish at once, than be remembered as a curse."

Thus saying, she quitted the room, calling to her ladies to follow; and a scene of indescribable confusion succeeded, whilst hasty preparations were made for instant departure. Servants hurried hither and thither; carriages and

horses were prepared in haste. What small supplies of money could be obtained, a few of the most necessary articles of apparel, some papers of great importance, some treasured memorials of days of happiness, and a small supply of ammunition for the men of the troop, were packed up with all speed; and a rapid consultation took place between Frederic and his principal advisers, as to the roads he should follow, and the course in which he should direct his flight. All agreed that Breslau was the place best fitted for his first pause, as it brought him near the dominions of friends and relations; and some one was eagerly sought amongst the attendants who could act as a guide to the fugitives through the desolate and inhospitable regions which they had to traverse on the way.

Algernon Grey, unable from his ignorance of the country to advise, and uncertain what part he might be called upon to play himself in this sad scene of flight and disaster, remained waiting the decision of others, till at length, a page entering called him to the presence of the Queen.

He found Elizabeth standing in a small room within, holding Agnes Herbert's hand in her's. There was no one else in the chamber; and a single candle afforded the only light, which showed him the pale countenances of his sovereign's daughter and her young companion.

"My lord," said Elizabeth quickly, as soon as he entered, "you promised to save and protect this dear girl. You will remember your promise, I am sure; and I must remember one I made to her uncle twelve long months ago. It was to the effect that, if by the chances of war I was obliged to quit Prague, I would send her back to him under safe escort. She would fain go with me now; but I must deny her wishes. You will doubtless be able to reach the Upper Palatinate in safety; there will be no object in stopping you. The fierce pursuers will most likely be upon my path like hounds before to-morrow morning. In your charge, therefore, I will place her; to your honour as a gentleman, and your conscience as a Christian, I entrust her. She is pure and good, noble and true, worthy of the

love of the highest in this or any other land, and as worthy of reverence, as spotless innocence can render woman. Stay not for ceremonious leave-takings; but farewell! You will find a horse prepared for her below; and God bless and protect you, as you protect her!"

"One moment, your Majesty," said Algeron Grey. "Some ten of my sturdy Englishmen have got into the town in safety. Each, I will answer for him, is ready to shed the last drop of his blood in your behalf. Each is well armed and mounted, and provided with gold to defray all his own expenses. You yourself give me another destination, and I will obey your commands; but let these men remain with you as a sort of body-guard. I will leave them under the command of young Hopeton, a gentleman of honourable family, and a friend's son. My page and one servant will be quite enough with us—indeed, we shall pass more easily few than many. The rest of the men, when you are safe, can join me at Heidelberg, where, please God, I will yet serve your Majesty to the best of my power."

“Be it so,” answered the Queen. “Now, farewell! And Heaven reward you, my lord, for all you have done for me and mine. Adieu, dearest Agnes, adieu!”

The Queen opened her arms as she spoke; and Agnes Herbert cast herself upon her bosom, and, for an instant, gave way to tears; but, at length, Elizabeth gently removed her, saying, “We have no time for long adieus, sweet cousin; we shall meet again, if it be God’s will.—There, my lord,” and she placed Agnes’ hand in his, looking at him steadfastly for a moment as she did so, and then raising her eyes to heaven.

Algernon Grey understood the appeal, and saying in a low tone, “On my life! on my honour!” he led Agnes from the room; and, without passing through the chamber where he had left Frederic, advanced to the top of the great staircase. There he paused for a moment, and, drawing Agnes’ arm through his, looked down on her face tenderly, asking in a low voice, “Are you afraid, Agnes?”

She raised her eyes, beaming through her tears:

“Not in the least,” she answered—“sorrowful, but not afraid.”

When they reached the court-yard, it presented a strange wild scene ; carriages, horses, men mounted and dismounted, were all gathered together by the light of a few torches ; and some minutes elapsed before Algernon Grey could discover which was the horse that had been prepared for his fair companion. At length, however, a strong but light jennet was found, with a lady’s saddle and a small leathern bag, or portmanteau, strapped upon the croup. A page held it, saying, that it had been got ready by the Queen’s order ; and, lifting the sweet girl lightly into the saddle, Algernon Grey mounted his own horse, bade the boy Frill, who was waiting, to follow, and rode out, turning towards the great gates of the citadel. There he found assembled the men of his own band, who had escaped into Prague, after the slaughter on the Weissenberg. He spoke for some minutes to a fine-looking young man at their head, and then bade his old servant Tony, who was with them, mount and come

after him. Then, riding quickly through the streets, he reached the gates of the old town, and began to descend into the lower part of Prague.

The city was now comparatively quiet. The news of an armistice, which he himself had given, had spread amongst the people, calming their fears and cooling their heated passions. Multitudes had retired to their own houses; others had gone to consult at the town-house as to their future conduct; and none but a few stragglers were seen here and there, as the young Englishman and his fair companion rode through the dark unlighted streets. A cold November wind was whistling amongst the tall houses; the sky was varying every moment, now showing a star or two, now loaded with heavy clouds; and every thing seemed to bear the same sad and cheerless aspect that was presented by the fate of the royal persons he had just left. Summer had passed away, and the long, cold, desolate winter was close at hand.

A flaming sort of beacon, raised in an iron frame upon a pole, shed a broad glare over the open space before the guard-house

of the inner gate, to which he directed his course; but no one was seen there but a sentry walking up and down; and Algernon Grey directed his servant to give the rein of the baggage-horse, which was led with them, to the page, and desire some one to open the gates. The warder, who came forth with one or two soldiers, seemed disposed to make difficulties; but the young Englishman produced the pass which he had received some hours before when going to the Bavarian camp; and, with a surly and discontented air, the man unlocked the heavy gates and let him pass. The drawbridge was slowly lowered; and, after a careful examination from the wicket-tower, to see that no enemy was near, the warder of the night opened the outer gates and let the whole party go forth, murmuring something about—"The fewer mouths in Prague the better!"

All was darkness, except where upon the summit of the Weissenberg the light of a fire here and there marked the bivouac of an Imperial regiment, occupying the position where

the Bohemian army had been encamped the night before. Taking a narrow road to the right, though he knew not well whither it led, Algernon Grey rode on for some way through a sandy part of the ground, and then passed a small stream by a narrow bridge hardly wide enough for two horses to advance abreast. The moment after a broader glare of light was seen upon the left, and innumerable flames, flickering and flashing on the clouds of smoke which rose from the wood fires, showed where the whole host of the enemy lay.

Algernon Grey laid his hand gently upon that of Agnes Herbert, saying in a low tone, "We are safe for the present, dear Agnes. On our journey we will be brother and sister. God send the time may come when we may call each other by dearer names!"

These were the first words that had been spoken, but they made Agnes's whole frame thrill; and the next moment, putting his horse into a quicker pace, Algernon Grey led the way onward to the dark woods that stretched out before them.

CHAPTER V.

"I FEAR there are storms in the sky, dear Agnes," said Algernon Grey, as the stars disappeared, and the heavy clouds rolled broad over the heavens. "How cold the night wind blows!—does it not chill you, dear sister?"

"No," she answered; "I am warmly clad; but the poor Queen!—I dread to think of such a journey for her. Happy it is, indeed, that all the royal children were sent away before!"

"Happy indeed!" repeated her companion; "for their presence would have added terribly to the sufferings and fears of such a time as this. The darkness of the night, however, like many another gloomy thing, may not be so evil as it seems. It will conceal their flight; for I

much fear that Maximilian of Bavaria would hold himself justified in seizing and keeping as prisoners both King and Queen, notwithstanding the armistice, if he discovered they had left Prague."

"He, surely, never would be so base!" cried Agnes, warmly.

"I know not," replied her lover; "policy is a base thing; and there never was an act so foul that some smooth excuse could not be found for its commission. He has been brought up, too, in a school where plausible pretexts for evil deeds is one part of the training; and to hold Frederic in captivity, would be too great a temptation for a Jesuitical spirit to resist, I fear."

"Then I will thank the darkness," answered his fair companion, "if it be as black as that of Egypt."

"It may sorely impede us ourselves," replied Algernon Grey. "Do you remember, Agnes, the last time that we wandered together through the greater part of the night? I never thought it would be our fate to do so again. But what

a different evening was that!—preceded, it is true, by dangers and sorrows, but followed by many brighter days. Oh, may this be so too!”

“God grant it!” cried Agnes. “I recollect it well—can I ever forget it? Oh, no; it is one of those things which, painted on memory—like the frescoes of the Italian artists, in colours that mingle with the very structure of that which bears them,—can never perish but with memory itself! To me that day seems like the beginning of life—of a new life, it certainly was; for what varied scenes—what spirit-changing events, have I not gone through since then! How different has been every aspect of my fate! how altered all my thoughts and feelings, my hopes, and even my fears!”

“I, too, shall remember it for ever,” answered Algernon Grey; “though my fate has not undergone such changes. On has it gone in the same course, tending, I trust, to happiness, but by a thorny path. Men have fewer epochs in their lives than women, Agnes—at least, in ordinary circumstances. They pass gradually from state

to state ; but still, for those who feel—though the current of external things may not be subject to such changes—yet, in the world of the heart, they find moments, too, marked out indelibly in the history of life. That night was one of them for me. Let us ride on somewhat faster, and I will tell you, Agnes, as much as will interest you of my past existence. You must know it some time. Who can tell when opportunity may serve again ?”

“ Oh ! not to-night, not to-night,” answered Agnes, shrinking from new emotions on a day which had been so full of agitation. “ I may be very weak, my friend ; but I have already undergone so much within twelve hours that, if you would have me keep my courage up for other dangers which may be still before us, you will not tell me aught that can move me more just now. And how can I,” she added, feeling that she was showing the feelings of her heart more clearly than woman ever likes to display them ; “ how can I hear anything, affecting sadly one who has saved, befriended, comforted, supported me, without being deeply

moved? Another day, Algernon, when we have calmer thoughts."

"Well, be it so," replied her lover; "I only sought to speak of matters not very bright, lest Agnes Herbert should think, hereafter, I had willingly concealed aught from her that she had a right to know."

"I shall never think evil of you, Algernon," she said, in a firm, quiet tone; "I could sooner doubt myself than you. Hark! do you not hear voices speaking—there, to the right?"

Algernon Grey listened, but all was still; and, somewhat quickening their pace, they rode on through the deep wood which then stretched along the bank of the Moldau. A few minutes after, the sky became lighter as the shadowy masses of vapour were borne away by the wind, and Algernon Grey said, in a low voice, "The moon is rising, I think. Darkness were our best friend, dear Agnes; but yet I trust we are now beyond all danger from the enemy. The wood seems coming to an end."

It was as he supposed; for, ere they had gone a quarter of a mile farther, the trees suddenly

ceased, and they found themselves on a broad road close by the side of the river. The moon was shining on the wide waters, rendering them one sheet of liquid silver; but a minute or two after they had emerged from the screen of branches, the horse of Algernon Grey swerved violently away from some object on the bank. He reined him round, and gazed towards the stream. There was a corpse lying on the bank, stripped already of arms and clothing; and a large dark body—what, it was not possible to discover—was seen floating rapidly down the stream. All was still and silent around, without a sound but the murmuring Moldau rushing between its banks, which there were low and flat; and it had a strange and horrible effect, as Algernon Grey gazed over the scene, to behold that naked corpse lying there in the bright moonlight, with the glistening river flowing by, and the dark towers of Prague, far up the stream, rising in its splendid basin of hills, vast and irregular, so that rock and town could hardly be distinguished from each other; while, on the other side of the river, was still to

be distinguished, though faint and indefinite, the glare of the Bavarian watchfires.

"There have been plunderers at work here already," said Algernon Grey, riding on; but Agnes had seen the same object which had caught his sight, and she kept silence, covering her eyes with her hand.

The road then rose again a little, then fell into a sort of wooded glen; and, as they were descending, a voice suddenly cried out, "Stand! who goes there?" and at the same moment an armed man, pike in hand, presented himself, while two or three others drew out from the bushes.

Agnes' heart sunk; but Algernon Grey answered, in a calm tone, "We are peaceable travellers, if we are not molested. But we will not be stopped."

He looked over his shoulder as he spoke, for he heard the galloping of a horse, and to his surprise he saw that, while the lad Frill remained firm, and had already drawn his sword, his old and tried servant Tony was riding quickly away.

“Peaceable travellers !” said the man. “You ride late, and with casque and cuirass. Come up, my men ; come up ! We must make these peaceable travellers account for their doings to General Tilly.”

Algernon Grey’s eye ran over the ground around. There were but four men visible, and all seemed armed alike as pikemen. “Drop behind, Agnes,” he said in a low tone ; “they have no fire-arms. I and the boy have.”

As he spoke, the nearest man advanced to lay his hand upon the horse’s bridle. “Stand back !” cried the young Englishman in a stern tone, drawing a pistol from his saddle-bow, and levelling it. “Make way there !—You are mere marauders, that is clear, stripping the dead. I will stop for the bidding of none such.”

The man recoiled a step or two ; but then, after an instant’s hesitation, he sprang forward, pushing his pike at the horse’s poitral. The young Englishman’s finger was pressed firmly and steadily upon the trigger, the hammer fell, a ringing report followed, and his assailant

reeled and fell back upon the turf at once. "Now for another," cried Algernon Grey, in German; "which of you will be the next?" and at the same moment he drew a second pistol from the holster. "Have the other weapons at hand, Frill," he continued, speaking to the page, but never withdrawing his eyes from the group before him. "Who is the next, I say?"

No one moved; but they still stood across the path, apparently speaking together in a low voice. It was evident to Algernon Grey that the enemy had no force to fall back upon, and that the party consisted merely either of men sent across the river to cut off any stragglers from the Bohemian army, or of the plunderers who always follow great hosts, and live too frequently by assassinating the wounded and stripping the dead. As they were still three to two, however, and the presence of Agnes Herbert filled him with apprehensions on her account which he had never known on his own, he was unwilling to hurry into any further strife, while there was a chance of the men

retiring and leaving the way open. He therefore paused, ere he took upon himself the part of assailant, holding the pistol ready cocked in his hand, and prepared at once to repel any sudden attack. After a brief consultation amongst themselves, however, the men separated ; one remained close to the road, merely drawing behind a tree to the side ; the other two ran to the right and left amongst the bushes, evidently with the intention of springing out upon him and his party as he passed. The young Englishman's position was dangerous ; but there seemed no choice. To retreat might throw him in the way of other and stronger parties of the same marauders. To parley with the adversary could produce no good result ; and, choosing his course speedily, Algernon Grey turned his head to Agnes, saying, " Close up close to me, dear lady ; you, boy, take your place on the left, put up your sword, and advance slowly, pistol in hand ; aim steadily and near, if any one attacks you, and still keep on."

Then, drawing his sword, he placed it between his teeth, and, holding the pistol in his

right, advanced at a foot-pace as soon as Agnes had ridden up to his side.

It would seem that the adversaries were somewhat intimidated by his proceedings, for they did not make their attack at once, as he had expected; and the delay brought unexpected help; for, as the young Englishman, keeping a tight rein upon his charger, was proceeding slowly along the road, he suddenly heard the galloping of horse behind him, and, for an instant, feared that all was lost. He did not venture to turn his head, indeed, keeping a watchful eye in front, and on either side; but the boy Frill, less cautious, looked round by the light of the moon, and then exclaimed aloud,—

“ Hurrah! Here comes friend Tony with help.”

Either the sort of cheer he gave, or their own observation, showed the marauders that they were likely to be overmatched. The man behind the tree started away and ran down the road, receiving the ball of Algernon Grey's pistol as he went, falling, rising again, and staggering in amongst the bushes. The other

two were heard pushing their way through the dry branches ; but, ere they could have gone far, the old servant was by his master's side.

“I beg your pardon, my lord, for running away. I'm not accustomed to that trick ; but I had heard English tongues, and caught a little glimpse of a fire, as we passed through the wood ; and I thought I could serve you better in the rear than in the front.”

“Who have you got with you ?” asked Algernon Grey, looking round to the other men who had come up, one of whom, with his sword's point dropped, was gazing down upon the body of the man who had been shot, while two others had followed Tony close to the young gentleman's side, and a fourth seemed to be searching the brushwood on the right for any concealed enemy.

“They are four men from Master Digby's troop,” answered Tony. “I could have sworn that the voices I heard were English, so I had no fear in going back ; and they may prove desperate good help to us as we proceed.”

Algernon Grey paused to consider for a moment ; and then, turning to the men, he asked them some questions, the answers to which showed that, after the last charge on the part of the Bohemian force, they had contrived to cross the Moldau, and conceal themselves in the wood. They had seen several bands of plunderers come over the river during the evening, and had lain quite still till it was dark, when they had lighted a fire, and sent one of their number to a neighbouring village for provisions. The store they had obtained had been scanty ; but they were solacing themselves with this supply when Tony's apparition called them to the saddle ; and, without hesitation or fear, they came down to aid a countryman in distress. They asked no better than to accompany the young Englishman and his party ; but Algernon Grey, recollecting that Digby's troop had suffered but little, and that Brandeis had been appointed as a rallying place, would only suffer them to accompany him three or four miles farther down the river and then, paying them liberally for their escort,

directed them, to the best of his knowledge, on their road to the point of rendezvous.

A little village lay immediately before him, when he parted with his new companions ; but it was all dark and solitary ; and, though the clouds had gathered thickly over the sky, and the north-east wind was blowing keen, he asked Agnes if she could still proceed ; and, on her answering in the affirmative, rode on along the broad and even road, catching, from time to time, a glimpse of the glistening Moldau on the left, though at a much greater distance than before.

“ If I recollect right, dear Agnes,” he said, “ some six or seven miles a head is the small town of Weltrus, where there is a passage-boat across the river. We can discover there whether there is any danger to be expected on the other side ; and, if not, can get across, placing ourselves in the enemy’s rear ; after which we shall have no difficulty in reaching Waldsachsen, where we shall be in a friendly country, and able, I trust, to make our way through the Upper Palatinate to Heilbroun and Heidelberg.”

Agnes agreed to all that he proposed; but the distance was somewhat greater than he had imagined. His own horse showed great symptoms of fatigue. It became necessary to proceed more slowly as they advanced; and the church clock struck three as they entered the narrow street. All was dark and silent as they advanced, till, when they were about midway through the little town, they heard the watchman of the night, as was then common in almost every village in Germany, and is still practised in remote places, knocking at the doors of the principal houses, and waking the drowsy inhabitants, to assure them that "all is right."

With the aid of this functionary, the landlord of the little Guest-house was brought to the door, and rooms speedily prepared for the travellers to repose. He would fain, to say the truth, have put them all into one chamber; for the manners of that part of the country were somewhat rude in their simplicity; and the good man could not understand the delicacy of a more refined state. All, however, was

arranged at length ; and Agnes lay down to repose. Her lover occupied a chamber near ; and his two attendants were placed on a pallet across the lady's door.

It was evident, from the quiet manner of the host, that no tidings had yet reached him of the rout of Prague ; but Algernon Grey was anxious to depart before the rumour spread through the country, and, with the first ray of morning light, he was on foot. From the boatmen at the ferry he found that the only intelligence they had yet received from the scene of war was nearly four days old. Men spoke of the combat of Rakonitz as the last great event, and satisfied that, on the way before him, there would be found none but the ordinary dangers which awaited all travellers in those days, he returned and roused Agnes from the deep slumber into which she had fallen.

In a few minutes she was by his side, saying, "How strange a thing is sleep, Algernon ! I had forgot all, and, in the only dream I had, I was a child again, in the happy valley by the banks of the Meuse."

Algernon Grey smiled sadly. "Sometimes I hardly know," he said, "which is the dream, which the reality: the vivid images of sleep or those that pass before our waking eyes. Perhaps a time may come when we shall wake to truer things, and find that this life and all that it presents was but a vision."

"No," said his fair companion, after a moment's thought; "there are some things that must be real. The strong affections that go down with us to death; good actions, and, alas! evil ones, likewise.—But I am ready; let us set out again."

Algernon Grey would not suffer her to encounter renewed fatigue without some refreshment; and, after a light meal already ordered, they passed across the river in the ferry-boat."

"Great news! great news!" cried a stranger, riding up to cross over from the other side, just as they were remounting their horses after landing, "The good Duke of Bavaria and General Bucquoy have defeated the heretic Elector Palatine under the walls of Prague, and taken him and his English wife prisoners!"

“Are you sure of the intelligence?” asked Algernon Grey, gravely.

“Quite,” said the horseman, sharply; “do you doubt it, young gentleman?”

“Nay, wait till you get to the other side of the water, and then inquire farther,” answered Algernon; “there is many a battle reported won, that is really lost—Good-day” and he rode on with Agnes, leaving the traveller in some doubt and consternation.

“We must lose no time, dear Agnes,” he said; “but hasten on into the rear of the enemy’s army ere this news spreads far. If we can reach Laun, I think we may escape suspicion as fugitives from Prague, and there are still some garrisons in that quarter which have not yet submitted to the Austrians.”

But, as usual in all calculations of distances, the state of the roads was not reckoned. The day proved lowering and gloomy, the wind blew in sharp fierce gusts over the bare hilly ground between the Moldau and the Eger, and though the distance from the one point to the other is not thirty miles in a

direct line, the sinuosities of an ill-made country road rendered it nearly double. At length as night was falling, Algernon Grey lifted his fair weary companion from her horse at the door of a small village inn, somewhat to the west of Teinitz, and gladly sat down with her by the fireside of the good widow hostess, who with her daughter were the only occupants of the house. The fare was scanty and simple, but there was a cheerful good humour in the manner with which it was served which rendered it palatable; and the inhabitants of a remote place, with neither fortress nor castle in the neighbourhood, seemed to know and care little about the war which had passed with its rude current at a distance from them. The woman, too, could speak German, and after having provided the weary travellers with all that her house could afford in the way of food, she threw her gray hood over her head, saying, with a cheerful laugh, to Agnes, "I am going out to search the village for eggs, and fowls, and meat; for it will snow before morning; and then we may not be able to get them."

Agnes gazed in Algernon's face with a look of apprehension; but he smiled gaily, replying to her look; "Let it snow if it will, dear Agnes. We shall then have an icy fortress for our defence, which no enemy will be in haste to pass. It will give us time for rest, and thought, and preparation."

The woman's prophecy proved true, for the next morning at daybreak the ground was covered with several feet of snow; and for three days the roads in the neighbourhood were impassable. They seemed to fly very quickly, however, to Agnes Herbert and Algernon Grey, though she felt her situation strange. But her companion's gentle kindness deprived it of any painful feeling. The rich stores of his mind were all poured forth to cheer and to amuse her; and if they loved before the hour of their arrival there, oh how they loved when, on the fourth morning, they again set forth from the poor but comfortable shelter they had found!

The day was bright, and almost as warm as summer, they and their horses, too, were re-

freshed and cheered, and a long day's journey brought them close to the frontiers of the Upper Palatinate.

Avoiding all large cities, they again rested for the night in a small town; and on the following day gladly passed the limits of Bohemia, never to return. The rest of their journey, as far as the banks of the Rhine, was performed without difficulty, though not without fatigue, remembered dangers made present security seem more sweet, the weather continued clear and fine, and they wandered for six days through mountains, and valleys and woods, almost as cheerfully as if in the first spring of young love they had gone forth together to view all that is fair and bright in the beautiful book of nature.

CHAPTER VI.

“EVIL news, Oberntraut, evil news!” cried Colonel Herbert, as he sat in his tower at Heidelberg, with an open letter in his hand. “Anhalt has been defeated under the walls of Prague—totally defeated! How could it be otherwise? Fifty thousand trained Austrians and Bavarians against thirty-five thousand raw recruits—a mere mob of herds and citizens, and wild Transylvanian horse!”

“What more?” asked Oberntraut, who stood before him with a stern but calm brow. “There must be other news at the back of that; and if you have not yet got it, few days will pass ere it comes.”

“There is plenty more,” said Herbert, sadly;

“Frederic, the Queen, and all the court fled, no one knows whither, and Prague surrendered on the following day.”

“I thought so,” answered Oberntraut, without any change of tone, “one could see it coming as plain as the Neckar from the bridge. But who is the letter from, your niece? Where is she?—How fares she?”

“I know not,” answered the old officer, laying the paper down upon the table and clasping his hands together.

“The letter is from Lodun—but he says no word of Agnes—God help us! But I will not be apprehensive; where her royal mistress could pass, she could pass too. Besides, even if she remained in Prague, these men would never hurt a woman.”

“I do not know,” replied Oberntraut, with a very gloomy brow. “Tilly is not tender, and such as he have done strange things in the Palatinate lately, as witness Bensheim, Heppenheim, and Otterberg. Herbert, I love your niece too well to rest satisfied so. I must have further news, and I go to seek it.”

Herbert rose and grasped his hand, gazing sadly in his face, "Alas! Oberntraut," he said, after a moment's silence, "I fear you are preparing disappointment for yourself.—Woman's heart is a wayward thing, and—"

Oberntraut waved his hand, "You mistake me, my friend," he said; "any disappointment that could be felt has been drunk to the dregs already. Agnes loves me not, as I should require to be loved; and I seek no heart that cannot be entirely mine. I have had my lesson, and have learned it well. I love her still, but with a different love to that of former times; cold, but not less strong; and in return she shall give me esteem and regard. This she cannot refuse; for it depends upon myself, not her—but let us talk of other things. I will have news of her, ere many days be over. I cannot leave my post, 't is true; nor can you quit yours; but still, neither of us can rest satisfied without some tidings of her fate—you have no indication of which way her steps are turned?—none of where the Queen has gone to?"

"None," answered Herbert. "Lodun says

nought that can give the slightest clue. He feared, it would seem, that his letter might fall into the enemy's hands, and wrote most guardedly in consequence.—Yet stay, I recollect that when she left me, the Queen made a solemn promise to send her back hither, if by the chances of war Frederic's court should be driven out of Prague—nor is she one to forget such a promise.”

“Hither!” said Oberntraut; “it is an unsafe place of refuge. Here, with war at our very gates; Heidelberg itself menaced daily; weak, vacillating princes, ruining the noblest cause and the finest army ever men had, the Spanish force, daily gaining ground against us; and the whole valley of the Rhine a prey to a foreign enemy.—But it cannot be helped. Even now, most likely, she is on the road; and we must try to shield her from peril, when she comes into the midst of this scene of carnage.”

As he spoke a heavy step was heard upon the stairs; and an armed man thrust his head into the room, saying, “The town is in a strange

state, Colonel; for the news has driven the people out of their wits with fear."

"What do the fools expect?" exclaimed Oberntraut; "that Maximilian will march hither direct?"

The man shook his head, as if he did not understand him; and Herbert interposed, inquiring, "What news, Ancient?"

"Why, that Spinola has taken Weinheim, and is marching hither," replied the soldier. "Professors and half the students are flying to Neckargemund; and all the rich citizens are frightening each other with long faces in the market-place; while the women are in the churches, praying as hard as they can pray."

"This must be seen to," said the Baron of Oberntraut. "You go and quiet the people, and prepare for defence. I will ride out with my troop, and discover what truth there is in these tidings."

"I love not to meddle," said Herbert, "for I vowed I would have no command, when Merven was put over my head here. But still, I suppose,

I must do my best; and, when the hour for fighting comes, they will find that I am young and active enough to defend the place, if not to command the garrison."

"Nay, nay, cast away jealousies," said Oberntraut; "do I not serve under mere boys when the time requires it?"

"Ay, you are mightily changed, my friend," said Herbert.

"I thank God for it," answered Oberntraut, "I have lost nought that was good to keep, and much that was better cast away. But minutes are precious: let us forth. I think the folks will fight when the time of need comes; for these citizens are often more frightened at a distant rumour than a present peril."

"Let those that will, fly," answered Herbert, casting his sword-belt over his shoulder, and putting on his hat. "If we are to have a siege, the fewer mouths and the fewer cowards the better."

¶ The town of Heidelberg presented a strange scene, as the two officers passed through the

streets, after descending, by the shortest path, from the castle. Consternation was at its height; and the only preparations to be seen were for flight, not for defence. Men on horseback and on foot — women in carts, many with children in their arms — waggons loaded with goods — every sort of conveyance, in short, that could be found in haste — well nigh blocked up the way leading to the eastern gate of the city, now called the Karl-thor; and in all the market-places and open spaces of the city, crowds of burghers were to be seen; some of them bold, indeed, in words, but almost all of them filled with terror, and meditating future flight.

Herbert mingled with the different groups, amidst a population where he was well known, asking, in a calm and somewhat scornful tone, — “Why, what are you afraid of, good people?” and generally adding, — “There is no danger, I tell you, if you have but a little spirit. First, the news is not true, I believe; and, secondly, Spinola has not half men enough to take Heidelberg, if but the schoolboys and parish-beadles will please to hold the gates against

him. Come, come ; go home and rest quiet. Six months hence it may be a different matter ; but now you have no cause for fear."

In many instances, his words, but, more still, his calm tone and easy bearing, had their effect in re-assuring the people. They began to be ashamed of their fears ; and a number of the principal townsmen returned to their homes to tell their wives and families that the danger had been magnified. As no farther report of Spinola's approach reached the town during the day, towards evening Heidelberg became far more tranquil, though it must be admitted that the population was considerably thinned between morning and night.

In the mean while, Oberntraut issued forth by the Mannheim-gate at the head of a party of about two hundred horse, and advanced rapidly into the plain. No enemy could be discovered for some time ; but at length the young commander saw the smoke of a burning mill at some distance, and concluded thence that Spinola, after sacking Weinheim, had retired, making a mere demonstration on the

city of Heidelberg, more for the purpose of striking the inhabitants with terror than with any intention of attacking a place too strong for his small force. Shortly after, from a little rise, the rear-guard of his army could be discovered marching towards Ladenburg; but, at the same time, several large parties of Spanish horse were to be seen on the south side of the Neckar, and two or three cornets could be perceived going at a quick pace along the mountain-road towards Wiesloch.

“On my life! they are somewhat bold,” said Oberntraut to himself. “Whither are they going now, I wonder? We must see.”

He paused for several minutes, watching; then called up to his side one of the young officers of his troop, and gave him orders to proceed with fifty men on the road towards Mosbach, to inquire eagerly for all news from Prague, and if he met with any of the ladies of Elizabeth’s court returning towards Heidelberg, to give them safe escort back. Three single horsemen he despatched on separate roads—the reader who knows the Palatinate will re-

member that, passing through the woods and orchards, there are innumerable small bridle-paths and cart-tracks—to watch the movements of the party which had been seen approaching Wiesloch; and then, advancing slowly amongst the trees, so as to conceal his force as far as possible, the German officer did not halt till he reached the village of Hockenheim, whence he threw a small party into Waldorf. Night fell shortly afterwards; and Oberntraut was seated at his frugal supper, when one of the men returned in haste to tell him that the Spanish horse had passed by Wiesloch, and just at nightfall attacked Langenbrücken, adding,—

“They had got possession of one part of the town, I think, ere I came away; but the people had barricaded the bridge, and seemed resolved to hold out in the other part.”

“We must give them help,” said Oberntraut. “How many of the Spaniards were there?”

“One of the men whom I found half drunk upon the road,” said the soldier, “told me that there were Jeronimo Valetto’s troop and another; in all near three hundred men.”

“Well, we are a hundred and fifty,” answered Oberntraut. “Go down, call the men to the saddle—but no trumpets, remember; we will do all quietly;” and, as soon as the soldier was gone, he filled himself a large horn-cup full of wine and drank it off; then placing his helmet on his head again, and tightening the buckle of his cuirass, he issued forth, and in five minutes more was in the saddle.

Advancing quietly and silently by the paths through the plain, which he well knew, he approached Langenbrücken, fancying at one time he heard a firing in that direction. As he came nearer, however, all was still; and neither sight nor sound gave any indication of strife in the long straggling village. At the distance of a quarter of a mile the young baron rode on with four or five men in advance of his troop; and, shortly after, heard several voices laughing, talking, and singing. They were not German tongues; and though the language that they spoke was more harmonious than his own, it did not sound sweet to Oberntraut’s

ear. Dismounting in profound silence, he advanced with four of his men on foot, till he came in sight of a fire at the end of the narrow street, where three Italian soldiers were sitting, whiling away the time of their watch with drink and song; and, approaching as near as he could without being seen, Oberntraut whispered a word to his followers, and then darted forward upon the little party of the enemy. He had one down and under his feet in a moment; the others started up, but were instantly grappled with by the German reiters, and mastered at once. One of them, indeed, levelled a carbine at Oberntraut and was about to fire; but a stout, tall German thrust his hand over the pan just in time to stop a report which would have alarmed the town.

“The least noise and you are dead men,” said Oberntraut, in as good Spanish as he could command. “Where is Valetto?”

“Who are you?” demanded the man to whom he spoke.

“I am he whom you call ‘that devil Oberntraut,’” answered the young baron; “so give

me an answer quickly, or I'll drive my dagger down your throat."

"He is in that house there, where the sign swings," answered the man sullenly, pointing up the street.

"And the rest of the men?" asked the Colonel.

"Oh, in the different houses, where you will see lights and hear tongues," answered the Italian soldier in bad Spanish; and looking over his shoulder at the same time, he saw the young baron's troop advancing quietly over the dusty road into the town.

"Let fifteen dismount and come with me," said Oberntraut in a low voice, as soon as the head of the troop was near; "the rest search all the houses where there are lights; but let a party be at each door before the least noise is made; then cut down the enemy wherever you find them. Give these men their lives; but guard them well."

Thus saying, he advanced, with the number he had commanded to follow him, towards the house which the Italian had pointed out as his officer's quarters. There was a little

step before the door; and, as Oberntraut put his foot upon it, he heard voices speaking in the room to the left. One was that of a man, loud, boisterous, and jovial. The other a woman's tongue, soft and sweet, but speaking in the tone of lamentation and entreaty. Something in that voice made the young baron's heart thrill; and, cocking the pistol in his hand, he pushed open the outer door, turned suddenly to the left, and entered the room whence the sounds proceeded.

Before him, seated at a table loaded with viands and wine, was a stout, tall man with a face inflamed with drink; while, a little in advance, held by the arm by a rough soldier, was the never-to-be-forgotten form of Agnes Herbert. Her face was drowned in tears; her limbs seemed scarcely to have strength to hold her up; and yet her eye flashed as she said, "You are cruel—ungenerous—discourteous!"

Valetto started suddenly up from his seat as he beheld Oberntraut's face; and the soldier, who held Agnes, turned fiercely round and was drawing his sword. But the young baron's

pistol was at his head in a moment ; the hammer fell, and he rolled dead upon the floor.

Agnes sprang forward to Oberntraut's side ; and Valetto sank down into his seat again as pale as death, for the heads of five or six German troopers were seen behind their leader, and the sounds of contention, fierce but short—pistols fired, clashing swords, groans and oaths in Spanish, Italian, and German—were heard from other parts of the house.

“Take that man, and tie him !” said the young baron, speaking to his soldiers. “Two will be enough. The rest go and still that noise ! I will come after.—Fear not, fear not, lady ! The town is in my hands—you are now quite safe.—Here, sit you down for an instant, and I will rejoin you speedily.” As he spoke, he led Agnes gently to a seat, and was then turning away to leave her, when she exclaimed, “Oh ! my kind friend—there is—there is—one who needs aid in that room behind, if they have not murdered him.—We were on our way to Heidelberg, when—”

“I will return directly,” said Oberntraut, as

the sound of another pistol was heard, "fear not—all shall be done that you can desire."

Thus saying, he left her; and Agnes, sitting down, covered her eyes with her hands and wept.

In the mean time the two German soldiers had tied Valetto's arms, and he sat gazing upon the fair girl he had been grossly insulting the moment before, with a look of anxious hesitation.

"Speak to him for me, lady," he said, at length, in Italian, "that incarnate devil will put me to death, if you do not. I know his face too well."

"What do you deserve?" asked Agnes Herbert, raising her eyes for a moment, with a look of reproach; "not for what you have said to me, for that I can forgive, though it was base and cowardly, but for what you have done to those who defended me, and only did their duty to the Prince they serve."

"What is it he has done?" cried Oberntraut, who had overheard the last words as he returned to the room.

“Master Algernon Grey,” answered Agnes, with the colour mounting in her pale cheek again, “escorted me hither from Prague, by the Queen’s commands. He aided the people to defend the town, and was brought in badly wounded. They tore me away from him when I would have staunched the blood; and I heard that man order him to be put to death.”

“Take him out to the door,” said Oberntraut, “and hang him to the sign-pole.”

“I did but jest! I did but jest!” cried Valetto, who had learned some German, “the cavalier is safe—you will find him living. I know—I believe he is living—if he died not of his wounds—I did but jest—the soldiers know it.”

“Nay, nay,—I beseech you,” said Agnes, in a tremulous voice, laying her hand upon Oberntraut’s arm, “I do not seek revenge—I ought not—must not feel it—Oh, spare him!”

“If our noble friend is alive, well,” answered Oberntraut, sternly; “but if he be dead, I will avenge him, whatever you may say, lady.”

The act shall be mine : come, show me where he was?—and you, my friend, make your peace with Heaven, as far as may be, and as soon ; for, if I find him not in life, your time on earth will not be more than five minutes. Come, dear lady, where was our friend when last you saw him ? I trust this man's words are true ; for no soldier would venture to put a prisoner to death, unless by his commander's orders."

"Come," said Agnes, "this way ;" and she led him through the door.

There was a man lying across the passage, with a ghastly wound on his left temple, and the blood weltering forth over the scorched and smoke-blackened skin, forming a small pool in the inequalities of the earthen floor. The lady recoiled for an instant from that fearful object ; but the life of Algernon Grey was at stake ; and, summoning all her resolution, she stepped over the corpse, and pursued her path towards the back part of the house.

It seemed that the German soldiers had not penetrated there ; and it is probable that many of Valetto's men had made their escape already

by the little garden at the back, the door of which stood open. Some few steps ere she reached it, the fair girl paused and laid her hand upon a lock on the right, hesitating with that terrible contention of hope and fear, from which the human bosom is seldom free, either in one shape or another. She might, the next moment, see him she loved lying a corpse before her eyes: she might find the greater part of her apprehensions vain; but yet fear had the predominance, and it required a great effort of resolution to make her open the door and look in. There was a light in the room; and the moment a step was heard, Algernon Grey turned quickly on the bed where he was laid in the clothes which he had worn on his journey; and, looking round with a faint smile, he said, in a low and feeble voice, "I am better, dear Agnes—the bleeding has stopped. What has that man done?—what was all that noise?"

Had the whole world been present, Agnes Herbert could not have resisted the feelings of her heart; and, advancing to the bed-side, she dropped upon her knees, resting her hands on

his, and exclaimed, "Thank God!—oh, thank God!"

"Ah, Oberntraut, too;" said Algernon Grey, "then I need not ask what those pistol-shots implied. Welcome, my good friend, welcome."

"Hush!" said Oberntraut, gravely, holding up his hand. "The doctors made me keep silence when I was wounded, and so will I do with you.—Are you sure that the wounds have stopped bleeding?—Come, let me see;" and advancing close to the young Englishman's side, he drew back his vest and the neck of his shirt, which were already stiff with blood, and saw a large wound on the right breast, and another, apparently from a pistol-shot, just below the bend of the shoulder.

"Is this all?" he asked, in a cheerful tone. "Methinks these won't kill you, my good friend."

"There is another just below the knee," replied Algernon Grey; "but that is nothing."

"Let me see," said Oberntraut; "let me see;" and he proceeded to examine.

“It is not much,” he said carelessly; “but still, this is bleeding and must be stopped; and we must take care that the others do not break out again. I wonder if there be such a thing as a leech in the place—there must be a barber, and we will send for him. Barbers never fly, for enemies must have their beards dressed as well as friends. Stay with him, dear lady, stay with him, and do something, if you can, to stop this blood. I will send some one who knows more of such matters than I do; my trade is more to shed blood than to stanch it.”

He staid to say no more, but hurried out; gave some hasty orders to the soldiers in the house, went farther down the street, looked into several houses where there were lights within and horses at the door, and, having satisfied himself that all resistance was over in the place, he inquired of a countryman, whom he found in one of the rooms, where the barber of the village was to be found.

“Oh, a long way farther up,” said the man; “you will see the pole and basin out,” and,

calling two or three of his troopers to follow him, Oberntraut strode away, giving various orders for the security of his men as he went.

The trade of the barber and the profession of the surgeon were then, very strangely, combined together throughout the world, with the exception of one or two cities in one or two kingdoms, in which the chirurgien was acknowledged as belonging to a higher and more honourable class than the mere trimmer of men's beards and the shaver of their cheeks. In every country town, however, the latter exercised the craft of bone-setting and wound-dressing, and the learned functionary of Langenbrucken was not at all surprised at being called upon by the Baron of Oberntraut to tend a wounded man.

"You have nothing to do," said the Baron in a commanding tone, "but to stop the bleeding, and to make sure that it does not break out again as we go to Heidelberg. This case is above your skill, my friend, so that I want you to do nought more than I have said: no vulnerary salves and sympathetic ointments, if you

please ; and, if I find you meddling beyond your craft, I will slit your ears."

"But how is the gentleman hurt?" asked the barber; "let me know that, at least, that I may bring what is needful."

"How is he hurt?" exclaimed Oberntraut, "what a question is that! First, he is very badly hurt, and I doubt he will not recover, so I don't want you to make it sure. Then he is hurt with sword-thrusts and pistol-balls. All you have to do is to bind up his wounds. Therefore come along at once; and, leading him down to the door of the house where Algernon Grey lay, he then went on to ascertain the number of the prisoners, and of the dead and wounded on both parts.

When the barber entered the room to which Agnes had conducted Oberntraut, he found her still kneeling by her lover's bed-side, and with her hand clasped in his; but the wound, from which the blood had been flowing when the young Baron left them, was now tightly bound up with a scarf, so that but a few drops trickled

through, staining the bandage slightly. The lady withdrew her hand as soon as the door opened, and the barber proceeded to his examination, and, being not without skill, from long experience, to which science is but a handmaid, he did what was really best at the moment, in all respects but one. His look and his words certainly did not tend to reassure the wounded man, for, with a fault very ordinary in his calling, he was inclined to make the worst of any case presented to him, for the sake of some little additional reputation if recovery took place, and of security if a fatal result occurred.

Poor Agnes's heart sank at the doubtful shake of the head, and the still more alarming words, "A very bad wound indeed—I wonder where the point of the weapon went;" and not even the cheerful tone of Oberntraut, when he returned, could dispel her apprehensions.

"There, get you gone, sallow-face," said the Baron, addressing the barber. "There's a crown for you. Your dismal looks are enough to push a sick man into the grave, were he a mile off it. Well, my good friend," he con-

tinued, speaking to Algernon Grey, "you will be upon your feet as soon as I was, I dare say. We must get you to Heidelberg to-night, however, for this is an open place and without defence. You shall have a little wine before you go to keep you up, and I have told the men to make some sort of litter to carry you.— There, do not speak; they told me that speaking was the worst of all things. I will answer all your questions, without your asking. I found a man and a boy in one of the houses hard by; the man shot through the leg, just like yourself, and the boy with a wound through his cheek and two or three grinders lost; but they'll do very well, and can ride as far as need be. Did you come in a carriage, or on horseback, dear lady? I can find no carriage in the place, but horses enough to mount a regiment."

"On horseback," answered Agnes. "We had no time for carriages in quitting Prague."

"Ay, ay! a sad affair, that!" said the young Baron. "But tell me, what has become of the King and Queen, for here we are all in darkness."

Agnes gave him a short account of all that had taken place up to the time of her quitting Prague—under some embarrassment, indeed, for the keen eye of the young Baron of Oberntraut was fixed upon her countenance during the whole time, not rudely, but firmly. Shortly after her account was concluded, and before he could ask any more questions, one of the men came in to say that all was ready, and that the boy had pointed out the lady's horse.

Some wine was then procured, and Oberntraut insisted not only that Algernon Grey should take some, but that Agnes should partake, passing the cup from the one to the other with a meaning smile, not without some share of sadness in it. The hastily-constructed litter was then brought in, and the wounded man placed upon it and carried out. At the door of the little hostelry a number of the villagers had gathered together on the report of the enemy's discomfiture, and Oberntraut addressed them in one of his blunt short speeches, saying, "I have a great mind to burn your town, you knaves, to punish you for not defending it better; but look well to the

wounded and I will forgive you. Keep a shrewd watch over the foreigners, and send them in to Heidelberg as they get better. I have left only one of my men with you, and if you do not treat him well I will skin you alive. There, bring the prisoners along ;” and, placing Agnes on her horse, he mounted and rode away.

CHAPTER VII.

THE long and weary hours of sickness fell heavy upon Algernon Grey. Never for a day during the course of life had he known the weight of illness before, at least within his own remembrance. Powerful in frame, and vigorous in constitution, moderate in habits, and inured to robust exercises from early youth, life had been hitherto all light activity; and if some sorrows and cares had touched him, they had not had power in any way to affect his corporeal frame. The aching head, the dim and dazzled eye, the fainting heart, the weary and powerless limbs of the sickly or the over-studious, he had never known. It had only been with him hitherto to will and to do; the

body had been no clog upon the mind ; and the active energies of both had seemed to give fresh strength and vigour to each other.

Now, day after day, and week after week he lay upon a sick couch in the castle of Heidelberg. Feeble, languid, full of pain, with every movement uneasy, with broken sleep at night, and drowsy heaviness by day, his cheek and his eyes dull, he lingered on under the unskilful hands of ignorant surgeons, who, with the wild phantasies of the time, only prolonged the period of sickness by the means which they employed to cure the wounds he had received.

All that could comfort or could scothe was done indeed by those around him, to alleviate his sufferings, and to make the heavy time pass lightly. Herbert was with him long every day ; and Agnes, too, with a maid to bear her company, sat many an hour beside him. She read to him the books he loved, she sang to him the songs which she thought might waken hope and banish despondency ; she conversed in gentle yet cheerful tones, and the sweet sound of her musical voice was the only medicine he received which seemed at all to advance his cure.

There was no opposition to her wishes. She came, she went, when she would ; and yet not one word had passed between her and Colonel Herbert on her position with regard to Algernon Grey. He seemed to comprehend it all ; to see that they loved mutually and truly ; to know that to withhold her presence from him would be to destroy him ; that to refuse her the solace of tending him would wring the gentle heart which it was the thought and business of his life to render happy. He was a man of a peculiar character too, not singular—though I had nearly used that word—for there are many such in the world : he was doubtful and careful at first, perhaps somewhat suspicious ; but his confidence once gained, it was unbounded ; and no thought of cold proprieties, no question of what the world would say, ever shackled the energies of any generous impulse. He had set himself free years before from all the trammels of convention : he had seen another do so from love for him. It had produced, though it so seldom does so, perfect happiness to both ; and he perceived no reason why, between two beings pure and high, and honest in mind, the same

conduct should not effect the same result. It might have been a fatal error had he mistaken the character of either, even in the slightest point. But there were other causes for his calm acquiescence in all that Agnes wished. Up to the hour at which she left him for Prague, he had watched her from infancy with fond care and anxiety; all her actions had been under his own eye; her very heart and soul had seemed open to his view; and he had given to her mind in many things the bent of his own. Though he loved the free, wild spirit that animated her at times, he had directed, he had counselled her; but now, for more than a year, she had acted entirely for herself. He had accustomed himself completely in thought, to look upon her as independent of his advice and control; and in none of her letters had he found one word to make him wish that his guidance was still extended over her. She had been alone too, with Algernon Grey in troublous times, and difficult circumstances, for many a long day: she had assured him, that, during that time, no brother could have treated her with more kindness and considera-

tion; and he knew that Agnes would not say that, if there was one dark spot in all the memory of their intercourse. Love, he saw, it was too late to guard against; and for all the rest, he had the fullest confidence.

But there was another who also, from time to time, visited with kindly feeling the chamber of the sick man. The young Baron of Oberntraut came, whenever he set foot in Heidelberg, to see his former adversary. He conversed cheerfully, and yet considerately with him; he told him tales of all those wild and daring exploits which he himself and his gallant band performed by day and night against the enemy, who were now overrunning the Palatinate in every direction—exploits with which the pages of the old chroniclers glow; for, if ever there was a name which, for devotion, gallantry, unceasing activity, and brilliant success with small means, deserves to be placed upon the roll of heroes, it is that of John of Oberntraut. But, of the sad reverses which the forces of the protestant princes met with, in consequence of the weakness, indecision, and discord of their leaders, Oberntraut spoke not; for he well

knew, that to depress the spirits of his hearer, would be to frustrate every means employed for his cure.

Yet at times he would gaze at him, as he lay with pale cheek, dim eye, and bloodless lip; and a look of thoughtful, sad, and intense speculation would come into the gallant soldier's face. What was it that he pondered? What was it that he calculated? Heaven knows! I cannot tell. Then, generally, he would turn away hastily, and bidding his companion adieu, leave the room.

It was one day, after a fit of this sort of dreamy meditation, that going down to the Altan to gaze into the plain of the Rhine, he found Agnes breathing the free air, for a short space, before she resumed her post in her lover's sick chamber. She spoke with him kindly and frankly for a moment; and he talked to her with a thoughtful and abstracted air; but very few words had passed, ere she bade him adieu, and turned to go.

"Stay, Agnes, stay," he cried; "I want to speak with you."

She turned, with her cheek somewhat paler,

and a degree of alarm in her look, which she could not hide; for now that she knew more of love, she was well aware that Oberntraut had loved her; and she feared that he might love her still.

“ You avoid me, Agnes,” he said; “ nay, hear me—I see it well—or, if you do not avoid me, you feel a restraint, an apprehension, when I am near you. There is but one means of banishing this; and, for both our sakes it must be banished : that must be by a frank explanation on my part. There was a time when I loved you more than life,—when I hoped I might be loved in return; and then, with rash vanity and eager passion, I would have taken the life of any man who attempted to cross my course.—Come, sit you down here, dear Agnes; for you tremble needlessly; and, when you have heard me to the end, you will never fear me, or shun me again. I tell you what has been, not what is. I saw you meet another; I saw your hearts and spirits instantly spring towards each other; I saw your eyes mutually light up with the same flame;—Why colour so, sweet lady? It is true, and natural, and just. I was half mad; I did

him wrong ; I sought his life ; I placed him in a situation of danger, difficulty, and it might have been, dishonour. I was vanquished, surpassed, and frustrated. From that hour I knew you never could be mine ; I felt I must have lost much of your esteem ; and that I had never possessed your love. I resolved that I would regain your respect, at least ;—ay, and your friendship. Weakened, tamed down, and softened, I spent the hours of sickness in arguing with my own heart, and conquering my own spirit ; and in this combat, at least, I was successful. I cast the thought of love away from me ; I made up my mind to the fact, that you were to be his. I could not deny to myself that he had acted generously by me ; and I resolved that I would return it by my very best endeavours. I knew, at length, that he who lies ill up there had rendered me the best service ; and, with a terrible struggle, but still a successful one, I cast jealousy, and anger, and mortified vanity, and irritated pride away, resolving that he should be my friend, and I would be his. So much for what is between him and me, Agnes ; now for our part of it. I loved you passionately then. I

love you calmly, coolly now, as a brother, Agnes,—as a friend; not only, no longer with hope, but no longer with passion. There is yet a remnant of pride in my nature; but this pride has turned to good and not to evil; for it has taught me to read myself, and study myself. I know that I could never be satisfied with aught but the first, fresh affection of a free and untouched heart; that I should be jealous of every thought—ay, even of every remembrance—of the dead, even as well as of the living; that from the woman who consented to be mine, I should require the whole affections of her nature, from the first to the last. I would not have in the whole past, one spot upon which her memory could rest with regret. I would be her happiness; and she should not have ever dreamed of other love but mine. In one word then, Agnes, if he who possesses your love, and I do believe deserves it, were to sink under the wounds he has received—which God forefend!—this hand, once so coveted, should never be sought by me. I tell you so to set your mind at rest, that we may be all that we ever can be to each other—true friends. Shrink not from me henceforth—dread

not my presence or words. Look upon John of Oberntraut as your brother, if you will; and at all events believe that nought which a brother's love could do for a sister will not be done at any time by me for you; nought that the warmest friendship can prompt shall be wanting on my part towards him you love."

"Oh, thank you! thank you!" answered Agnes, giving him her hand. "This is kind, indeed. But, tell me, were those words you spoke just now about his state, but hazarded to show your meaning, or uttered as warning to me to prepare?"

She covered her eyes for a moment, and then added, in as firm a tone as she could command,—

"You said, if he should sink under his wounds. Oh, tell me! tell me! is this likely? He does not seem to amend, or so slowly that one day shows no gain upon the other; and these men who come to attend him, with their grave faces and scanty words, alarm rather than re-assure me. My heart sinks when I see them."

"Nay; he will do well," said Oberntraut, in

a kindly tone. "No thanks to them, I do believe. 'Tis despite of their art, rather than by it, that he will be cured : by a strong frame, and not by drugs and salves. He will do well. Even to-day he is better. There is more light in his eyes ; his lips are not so pale ; his voice was somewhat stronger.—But there is one question I would ask you, Agnes. Do you yet know who he is?—Are you aware that this name of Algernon Grey——?"

"Oh, yes!" she answered, with a smile, cheered by the hopes he had given. "I have long known all ; but you should not doubt his honour in aught. He has not a thought that is not high and true."

"I do not doubt," he answered. "I am sure he is honest and noble ; but many a tale hangs long upon the lips, in times of trouble and of sickness. I heard this, of which I have spoken, from some of his men, who have come in from Breslau, and who seem to love him much. They came asking for 'the earl,' and no one knew whom they meant till I questioned them.—But a word or two more must be said, dear lady, before we part. I would fain that he cast away these

men's medicaments. I firmly believe they keep him ill, and that, if left to nature, he would have been well ere now. It is very needful that he should recover speedily. The sky is growing very dark, lady: Tilly, that fierce butcher, is already on the Rhine; post after post has been lost by our weak generals. Though Franckenthal holds out, yet it, and Heidelberg, and Mannheim, are all the places of good strength that we possess; and what can I do with a few hundred men? or Horatio Vere, in Mannheim, with his handful of English? Heidelberg will not be long ere she sees the Bavarian under her walls. Herbert will not leave this castle so long as there is breath within him. I may be away, or dead—who can tell?—and there must be some one to protect and guide you. We must have him well with all speed. Would he would cast away these drugs. The physicians keep his chamber far too hot. Plain cold water and free air would do more than all these potions.”

“Is there not a famous man at Heilbronn,” asked Agnes, “whom we could send for?”

“That is well bethought,” answered Obern-

traut. "But there is one man here who, though no physician, has studied nature and her secrets more than any of them—old Dr. Alting. I will go down and bring him up; and, if he sanctions my plan, we will pursue it, without asking further help. Farewell, for the present. Cheer him, cheer him, dear lady;" and, thus saying, he hurried away.

Taking the path under the old arsenal, which stood in front of the large octagon tower, Oberntraut hastened down into the town, and soon reached the house of Dr. Alting. He asked no one for admission; but, with his usual impetuous spirit, opened the door of the outer chamber, and was walking straight towards the old professor's library, when his servant-maid suddenly appeared, and placed herself in the way, saying, "The doctor is busy, noble sir, and said I was not to let any one disturb him."

"I must disturb him," answered Oberntraut, putting her unceremoniously aside, and walking on towards a door, through which he heard voices speaking. The moment after, he laid his hand upon the lock and pushed with his

strong arm. Something resisted slightly; but the small bolt gave way, ere he had time to think and withdraw his hand, and the door flew back.

Old Alting, with his black cap off and gray hair streaming, ran instantly towards him, as if to stop his entrance; but, at the same time, Oberntraut saw clearly a man's figure, wrapped in a large falling cloak, pass through the opposite door.

"Why, how now, doctor," he exclaimed; "are you busy with your familiar? I beg his highness's pardon, for intruding upon his conference with his master, and yours, too; but you must excuse me, for I have a friend sorely ill, up at the castle, of three bad wounds and two worse leeches; and I would fain have you tell me what you think of his case."

The old man seemed sadly discomposed, and ruffled in temper. "Am I a physician or a surgeon either?" he cried. "In truth, Baron of Oberntraut, I will not be thus disturbed, when I have a pupil with me. I will not have aught to do with your friend. Let him get well as he can. It is not my trade to

cure wounded men who get themselves hurt, brawling with their neighbours and breaking God's law."

"Nay, nay, my good doctor," exclaimed Oberntraut. "Poor Algernon Grey has been doing nought of the kind. He was defending your friend Herbert's fair niece, that was all."

"Algernon Grey!" cried Doctor Alting. "Is it Algernon Grey? Why, I knew not he had returned. He has never been to see me. That was not right; but I will come—I will come."

"He could not visit you, my good friend," replied Oberntraut, "unless he was brought on men's shoulders; for he was well nigh knocked to pieces at Langenbrücken now more than two months ago, and has ever since been lying in the castle, with two men trying to promote his getting worse."

"I will come to him," said Alting, more calmly; "though you are a rude visitor, my good young lord. Wait for me a moment, and I will go with you—if I can."

Thus saying, he left Oberntraut, who muttered to himself, "If he can! What should stop him if he will?"

The next moment he heard voices speaking again in the room beyond, and he walked to the window that he might not catch the words.

At the end of about ten minutes, the old man returned, with a broad hat upon his head, and a mantle over his shoulders. He was followed by another personage dressed in black, with his neck and chin buried in a deep ruff, forced up by the collar of a large wrapping cloak. On his head, too, was an enormous black beaver, pressed far down over his brow, and his face was farther hidden—not by the ordinary moustache and small pointed tuft of the time, but by a wide-spreading beard, which covered his whole chin and cheeks.

Oberntraut gazed at him firmly for a moment; and Dr. Alting, as if imagining that the young Baron's inquiring look might embarrass his companion, said, in a quick and hurried tone, "This is a learned pupil of mine, who, since I saw him, has travelled in many lands, and has

learned a great many curious and valuable secrets. He will go with us, and give us his advice."

"I thank him heartily," said Oberntraut, gravely. "We had better set forth, my good friend; and, as the shortest way, we will go through the garden-gate, under the mills, and then up through the subterraneans;—I have the keys."

Thus saying, he moved towards the door, but stopped for a moment, courteously, to let the stranger go first. As soon as they were in the street, he led the way to a narrow lane which conducted to the old wall, below that part of the gardens where the valley had been filled up with rocks and earth to form terraces. A few hundred yards from the entrance of the lane, a small arch was seen in the wall; and Oberntraut, producing a key, gave admission to his two companions. Locking the heavy, iron-plated door as soon as they were within, he looked around, and seeing some labourers working on a path to the right, he took the zig-zag road to the left. It was a good deal longer, as both Dr. Alting and himself well knew; but the

worthy professor made no observation, and followed in silence. Some way up the slope, a small open arch with an iron grate was seen; but it also was opened by the young Baron's keys, and he led the party, by various stairs and passages, till they came out beneath the steps leading from the Altan to one of the smaller entrances of the castle. Then, hurrying his steps, Oberntraut, as if some sudden fit of impetuosity had come over him, mounted towards the higher parts of the building so rapidly, that the poor old professor was obliged to call for mercy.

"Well!" muttered Oberntraut to himself, "the castle is nearly deserted now; and there is no great chance of meeting any one. This way, my reverend friend—in the chamber above lies my young companion;" and, going on more slowly, he opened the door of the room where Algernon Grey had remained ever since his arrival.

Agnes Herbert was sitting by the bedside, with a book in her hand; and her maid was seated in the window, busy with some embroidery. But the young lady instantly

closed the book when Oberntraut and his companions appeared ; and, beckoning her aside, the young Baron said, in a voice loud enough to be heard by all, " I have brought Dr. Alting to see our friend Algernon ; but I wish, dear lady, you would send for your uncle, to his lodging in the tower. He is down at the Trutzkaiser. Tell him I have something important to say to him, and will join him in a few minutes."

Agnes looked somewhat surprised at the request ; for the message might as well have been conveyed by an ordinary servant ; but Oberntraut's face wore a peculiar expression ; and, merely bowing her head, she left the room with her maid.

In the meanwhile, Algernon Grey had turned round uneasily on his bed, and welcomed Dr. Alting with a faint smile.

" Lie still, lie still," said the old man, advancing, and taking his hand : " I have come to see what can be done for you. So, you have been wounded, it seems—and two months ill. They must be strange physicians, not to have killed you or cured you in that time !" and

he pressed his fingers on the young man's pulse.

"I say that all he requires is fresh air and cold water," said Oberntraut: "if he has those, he will be well in a week."

"As to fresh air, you are right," answered Dr. Alting. "The frost is gone, the wind is mild;—open that window at once. As to the cold water, we must inquire farther;" and he proceeded to examine the wounds in the young gentleman's breast and shoulder. "Two months?" he said at length.

"Nay, well nigh ten weeks," answered Algernon Grey, faintly.

"Then, cold water is not the remedy," said Dr. Alting; "good sound wine of the Rheingau—a moderate quantity at a time, but frequently repeated—and wholesome and nourishing food, is all that is required. Take no more of these medicines, my young friend;" and he pointed to some potions on the table; "they might be good enough at one time; but the disease has spent itself, and all you want is strength to heal your wounds. Is not that your opinion, my learned friend?" he continued, turn-

ing to the gentleman who had accompanied him.

“Assuredly!” said the other; “but I will add a remedy, which will greatly aid his cure. It is a secret however, which no one must hear. If you two gentlemen will retire for a moment, I will join you at the door immediately.”

Oberntraut instantly withdrew, without reply; and Dr. Alting followed more slowly. But as soon as they were in the corridor, and the door closed, Oberntraut grasped the old man’s arm, saying, in a low tone, and with an agitated look, “This is a terrible risk!—we have no force to defend the town, in case of sudden attack. ’T were better to send off for Vere and his men directly, and leave Mannheim to its fate, rather than suffer the King’s person to be so risked;” and he took a step towards the head of the stairs.

“Stay, stay!” cried Dr. Alting, catching him by the sleeve; “let us hear farther, ere you act.”

CHAPTER VIII.

THE sun had set; the young moon had risen; and the sky of the early spring-time was full of stars. A great deal of bustle had been observed in the castle, though it was now no longer tenanted by a host of servants, and the gay scene of courtly splendour which it had formerly displayed—the hurrying multitudes, the splendid dresses, the clanging trumpets, and the beating drums, had subsided into dullness, silence, and almost solitude. The ruined fortunes of the Palatinate house were shadowed forth in the desolate change which had come over their dwelling-place.

Yet, as I have said, an unusual degree of activity had appeared in the castle during the

last two hours before sunset. Some seven or eight mounted men had gone forth in different directions, none of the ordinary inhabitants of the place knowing what was their errand. The young Baron of Oberntraut himself rode out, followed by a single trooper; but, instead of going down into the plain, which was the direction he usually took, and where his men were quartered, he rode up by steep and precipitous paths—where, perhaps, a horse's hoof had never trod the ground before—round the hills looking upon the Rhine, and going from height to height, often paused to gaze, shading his eyes with his hand, and seeming to scrutinize every path and road in the wide extent of country below him.

At length, just at sunset, he had returned to the castle, and inquired if any of the messengers had come back. Three had already arrived; and he examined them strictly as to what discoveries they had made in regard to the movements of the enemy's troops. They all agreed that Tilly and his forces had passed over the bridge which he had thrown across the Neckar,

had then directed his course towards the Rhine, and had crossed that river near Oppenheim.

This news seemed to give the young officer great satisfaction; and he proceeded from the court to the lodging of Colonel Herbert, where the door was carefully closed after his entrance. About an hour subsequently, as good a meal as could be prepared in the castle was carried up to the rooms of the English officer; but his own servant and Agnes Herbert received the dishes at the door, and the ordinary attendants were not suffered to enter. Another hour elapsed, and then Herbert and Dr. Alting came down the stairs together, looked everywhere round when they reached the door of the tower, and then walked slowly on, taking their way along the inner rampart towards the library-tower, and thence, by the small doors and steps, into the garden. There they turned towards the grating of the arch by which Dr. Alting had been brought that morning to the castle; and Herbert, opening the gate, paused beside it conversing with his old friend.

They had been followed, however, for some

way by another party ; for, while they were walking along the rampart, Agnes had descended the stairs with the gentleman who had accompanied the old professor in the morning ; and they, too, took their way to the gardens. The young Baron of Oberntraut, and Colonel Herbert's servant armed with a stout tuck, followed at a distance of about fifty yards, and, in whichever way Agnes and her companion turned their steps, kept them still in sight.

The fair lady's path seemed somewhat devious : now it was directed towards the lower garden ; then, at a word from the gentleman by her side, she mounted the steps, and wound round amongst the trees above, towards the great terrace ; then down to the parterres with their curious arabesques ; then up again by another flight of steps to the terrace once more ; the moon shining bright upon their path the whole way.

" It is a weakness, I know," said her companion, " to cling thus to particular scenes, which only fill one with melancholy regret ; but here, fair lady, have passed so many happy

hours, that I feel it difficult to tear myself away, although these inanimate objects present nothing to my mind but the memories of pleasures gone—for ever, perhaps.”

“The past has a spirit, your Majesty,” answered Agnes, “which animates the dull form of the present. The soul of happiness departed, I can well understand, gives life to this changed scene; and to your royal eyes rise up, with every object that we pass, some peculiar hours or days which can never die to the affectionate remembrance of the heart. But let me hope, too, that there lives a future, when once more, amidst these scenes, with all you love best on earth, the days of old shall be renewed, and these dark moments be recalled but as a tempest-cloud which the wind has long swept away.”

Frederic shook his head sadly. “I know not,” he said; “God grant it! but there is a dark foreboding at my heart that the curse of ambition is upon me, and that the joys which I did not estimate sufficiently when they were mine, are snatched away for ever.”

“Ah, no!” said Agnes, sadly: “I would fain think that honour, and virtue, and high

purposes can never sink, overwhelmed, before fraud, and violence, and wrong."

"Yet such is too often the course of things here below," replied Frederic. "It will not be for ever. But the world has a life as well as we, dear lady; and our lives are but parts of the world's life. The time will be, when, in the long existence of the universe, all things shall be set right and honesty triumph; but, alas! I fear no man's time is wide enough to give room for hope that evil suffered will have compensation here. I might add, no man is good enough to complain, even when his best purposes are the steps that lead to the punishment which his faults deserve. Alas! fair Heidelberg, thou place of so many memories and so many dreams, I must quit thee once more—for ever—yes, I feel it is for ever!" And, with his head bent and his eyes full of tears, he descended the steps and hurried on to the spot where Herbert and Dr. Alting waited for him.

"Herbert," said the unfortunate Prince, "I go; but you must stay, and, if it be possible, defend this place we both so fondly love from the rude spoiling hands of the enemy. It

would be bitter indeed to know that the Bavarian was in these halls ; that his brutal soldiery were wasting and devastating all that a long line of princes have with care and skill been bringing to perfection ; that the scenes of love and peace—the dwellings of art, and poetry, and science, were polluted by men who have neither feeling nor reverence for such high things. I do beseech you, my noble friend, aid to defend this place to the best of your power, though some wrong has been done you by others, but not by me.”

“ With the last drop of my blood, Sire,” answered Herbert ; “ but in truth it is time your Majesty should go. You have a long and dangerous journey before you ere you can rejoin Mansfeld ; but I trust that it will pass safely, and that together you will strike such a stroke at the enemy, as will keep him far from these walls. Have you all the papers you sought ? ”

“ All, all,” answered the King ; “ but some one must go with me to lock the gate after I and the good Doctor here have passed.”

“ That will I, your Majesty,” said Obern-

traut, who had now joined the rest; but Frederic replied, "No, no, you had better mount at once and ride down to your men as we agreed. Herbert, you have to see that no one else quits the castle for two hours. Does this dear lady know the way?"

"Right well," replied Herbert: "I took care of that long ago."

"And will she have no fears in returning through those passages alone?" inquired the King.

"None, Sire," answered Agnes, with a smile; "I have become inured to real dangers, and fear no imaginary ones."

"Well, then—farewell, my friends," said Frederic, shaking hands with Herbert and Oberntraut; "if we never meet again here below, God bless you! and we shall meet hereafter, I do trust."

Thus saying, he passed through the open gate with Dr. Alting. Agnes received a large key from her uncle, while Oberntraut took a dark lantern from the servant, unshaded it, and placed it in her hands. Thus provided, she followed quickly upon the steps of the King, and lighted him through the long and winding

passage which at that time led down from the castle to the town. Not a word was spoken as they passed between the heavy walls of rude masonry, on which the green damp stood thick, and through which the water from the earth around oozed in many places ; but at the door leading into the city Frederic paused and pressed Agnes's hand, saying, " Farewell, my sweet cousin ! Wear this ring for my sake and for the Queen's. See our young friend Algeron to-night, and I think you will find that the intelligence I gave has proved a better medicine for his wounds than any the doctors have prescribed. It was the cup of hope, fair Agnes ; but it were well that as soon as he can bear a horse's pace he should set out for England without delay of any kind. Once more, farewell !"

Agnes put the key in the lock and threw the door open for the prince and his old companion to pass ; and then saying, " God speed your Majesty !" saw the King depart from the dwelling of his ancestors for the last time.*

With slow and thoughtful steps, and eyes that more than once filled with tears, the fair

* This last secret visit of Frederic to Heidelberg is now I fancy placed beyond doubt.

girl trod her way back towards the castle. She took not, however, the same course which Oberntrant had followed when he led Frederick up some hours before ; but, turning to the right at the top of the ascent, where a long gallery ran for some way round the side of the hill, she came to a door which led forth into the open air within the gate, near the great battery which connected the defences of the castle with the old town-wall, long since destroyed. The exit was into a narrow passage between the armoury and the tennis-court ; and there she found Colonel Herbert pacing slowly up and down awaiting her coming.

“ I have been up to see Algernon, my love,” he said, “ and the poor youth seems much better this evening. He asked if you would not come again to-night, Agnes ; so I promised for you, and left your girl to wait at the foot of the stairs. Would to Heaven that he would get well quickly ! for every report of the enemy’s movements makes me tremble till there is some one to protect you in case I should be taken away.”

The colour mounted into Agnes’s cheek ; for

these were the first words that Herbert had ever uttered having a reference to the probability of a union between Algernon Grey and herself.

“I am sure he would protect me,” she said, with a little of that timid hypocrisy which women ever practise even to their own hearts; but the next moment she added more frankly, “The King has just told me that it will be absolutely necessary for Algernon, as soon as he can travel, to go to England for a time.”

“That is unfortunate indeed,” said Herbert, thoughtfully; “but what does the King know of his affairs?”

“Nay, I cannot tell,” replied Agnes timidly. “His Majesty gave him happy news this evening, it would seem, and that has doubtless done him good. It is also very likely that he should have heard from his ambassadors in England much that has not reached us here.”

“True,” replied Herbert, “a man of his rank is ever food for busy tongues.—But there is one thing, my child, which must not be long delayed. He must know all respecting her whom he has chosen.”

"Oh, hush!" cried Agnes, in much agitation. "I know not that he has chosen me—I cannot tell that—"

"Then he has not yet asked your hand?" said Herbert quickly.

"No," replied Agnes, and was pausing there with some anxiety respecting the effect of this information upon Herbert, when she suddenly remembered a chance expression of Algernon Grey's the very day before he had been so sadly wounded; and she added, "I know that he loves me—that he did not conceal; but he said that he would speak with you as soon as we arrived—tell all—explain all."

Herbert mused for a moment: "That was right," he said at length, "that was quite right; and I can easily conceive, Agnes, that the hours of sickness and despondency have not been those he would choose to execute his purpose. Still, let the explanations first come from you, my love. It were quite as well that, ere he says one word more, he should know fully what he is doing. I do not doubt him, Agnes—do you?"

"Less than I should doubt myself," answered

Agnes, warmly. "I will do as you tell me; I would have done so before, but I had not your permission. Yet, surely, it cannot be done, while he is still so ill."

"Oh, no," answered Herbert; "there is time enough. Let health come back, at least in some degree; and then, the first time that he goes forth to walk in the gardens here, let him hear the tale. It is pleasant in the sunshine and the free air, beneath green trees and amidst sweet flowers, to tell such a story of times gone. The mind pauses on it untrammelled with the worldly thoughts of crowded cities; the heart opens to it unoppressed by the heavy air of the close room. In the presence of heaven and of God's works the pure, high feelings which nature gave at first, but which hang their heads like sickly city-flowers amongst the multitude, raise themselves up refreshed; and we understand and sympathize with the sorrows and the hopes of others, and feel the link of kindred between ourselves and all mankind. Take some such moment, my sweet child; it is but fair to him and yourself."

Thus saying, he led her on to the castle, and

to the foot of the stairs which ascended to Algernon Grey's room. Her maid was waiting for her; and, thus accompanied, she went up and was well repaid by seeing the brighter and more cheerful look, which, to her eyes, was full of the auguries of returning health. Nor was she mistaken; for, every day from that hour forward, Algernon Grey gained ground against disease. His wounds healed rapidly. The languor and the feebleness they had left behind passed away, and at the end of little more than a week he was able to rise and sit by the open window, and listen to Agnes as she sung. Spring advanced, too, early and radiant; and several causes of disquietude were removed from the inhabitants of the castle. News came, not only that Frederic had recrossed the Rhine in safety and joined his army on the other side, but that, aided by his bold friend, Count Mansfeld, he had defeated the Imperial army, and forced Tilly himself to retreat. No speedy attack of Heidelberg was, consequently, to be expected; and Herbert employed the time of respite thus afforded in strengthening still further the defences of the place.

It need not be said that the heart of Agnes Herbert grew lighter and more cheerful hour by hour. How soon it is in youth, that we forget the storms and tempests that pass over us ! The drops are scarcely dry upon the grass ere the sunshine seems to us more bright ; the distant sky more clear than ever ; and thus it was with Agnes Herbert—ay, and with her lover also, though he had a wider knowledge of the world. The dark events which had taken place in Bohemia, if not forgotten, were remembered as rendering present joy, only more sparkling ; and, when Agnes walked forth one day through the gardens above the shining Neckar, with Algernon once more by her side, it seemed to her the brightest hour of existence ; and she could scarcely bring her heart to fear that the coming time might present days as dark as those that had been passed. On they went for more than an hour, walking slowly, for his strength had not fully returned ; but their conversation was like a gay mountain stream, bounding with brilliant leaps from one point to another. They sat down to rest ; they rose up and walked on again ; and they might

have rambled far and long, had not a quick step behind them caused Agnes suddenly to turn round.

The person who followed was her lover's page, with eager haste in his look; and, the moment he came up, he held out a letter to his master, exclaiming, "A messenger from your uncle, my lord, has brought this post-haste from England."

Algernon Grey took it calmly, opened the packet and read. But Agnes could see his countenance change; his brow contracted—his lip quivered—his cheek grew red.

"This is bad news, yet good, my Agnes," he said. "To tell the bad first, I must away to England without an hour's delay; but, as some consolation, I learn that all those difficulties and impediments which seemed raised up like a barrier between me and happiness are now giving way, and, ere a month be over, must certainly fall to the ground."

"To England, without an hour's delay?" cried Agnes. "Oh, you cannot go! You are unfit for such a journey."

"Nay, not so," replied her lover. "To

Mannheim will be the worst part of the affair. Then dropping down the Rhine in a light boat would but refresh me, were it not that I part from you, my Agnes; but the joyful thought of my return must cheer me; and, though the hours will be long, they will not be many, ere I return to claim this hand, not promised, yet mine, I know."

"Oh, the dread uncertainty of the future!" said Agnes, with a deep sigh and eyes full of tears. "Had any one told me, Algernon, but a few brief months ago, when I first met you here, and wandered through these gardens with you, that I should have seen such sights, and witnessed such disasters, should I have believed it?—should I have believed even that I myself should be so changed in thoughts, in feelings, almost in spirit, I may say? And what may not the coming months, too, bring? I thought it was bitter enough, when I parted at Prague from those I loved dearly, from those connected with me by the ties of kindred, with a strange uncertain fate before both them and me; but what will it be now, to part with you!"

"Let us not cloud the moment, dearest Agnes,"

said Algernon Grey, " which in itself is a sad one, with gloomy anticipations. I go, I acknowledge, full of hope ; for the thought of being freed from a detested bond, which bars my union with her I love, is too joyful not to lighten even the pangs of parting. But you say, my Agnes, that at Prague you left those connected with you by the ties of kindred ; I knew not that you had kindred there."

Agnes shook her head sadly and thoughtfully ; for the tone of the mind contrives to extract from every event reflections of the same hue with itself. " It shows how little we can count even on an hour," she said. " I had thought to-day to tell you, amidst these fair scenes, a melancholy tale of days long gone—to dwell upon it, and to let you hear each incident, without which, a story such as this is but a lifeless sort of stick, like a vine stripped of its leaves in the winter season. But now, as we go back, I must do it drily and briefly.—My mother was the Abbess of a noble convent in France, of the high family of Latour d'Auverne, and, consequently, by the father's side third cousin, and by the mother's second cousin to the Electress

Dowager, Louisa Juliana. In the course of the war, an English gentleman, of high family but small fortune, was wounded severely whilst serving under Henry the Fourth of France, was brought to the small town of Mousson, where the Abbey stood, and was tended kindly by the good sisters. The greater part of the family of Latour are zealous Protestants, as you know; but this branch has always been vehemently Catholic; and the young Abbess had been brought up in that faith. You know the degree of liberty which nuns of high rank have in France; so that the vows they take place very little restraint upon their intercourse with the world. The Abbess saw my father often; acquaintance, with kind care on the one side and gratitude on the other, soon changed into friendship and to love. My mother was frightened at her feelings; and when my father first ventured to speak his affection, fled from him in terror and in anger. But they met again, and then he found means to shake her trust in the dogmas of the Church to which she had hitherto belonged. He brought her into communication with a Protestant minister.

The Bible in its simple purity was laid before her. Her eyes were opened, and she renounced the superstitious faith ! She dared not do so openly, however ; for she was surrounded by powerful and unscrupulous relations, who would have hesitated at no means to punish, where they could not restrain ; and she was wedded in secret to my father, till the opportunity served for removing her to a Protestant land. It became necessary that she should quit the convent ; and they removed to a small solitary place in the Vosges, where I was born. Various events detained them between four and five years, living concealed in profound retirement ; but they were sought for everywhere ; and my father found, at length, that it would be necessary to fly, for that a clue had been obtained to their retreat, and pursuit was coming near. They, consequently, set off for the Rhine on an autumn evening, my father and mother in a carriage, with a few servants on horseback, and my father's horse led behind. Their movements, however, had been watched. In passing through a wood the carriage was fired upon, and my mother and one of the men

wounded.* She said, at first, that the injury was but slight; and my father, springing out, mounted his horse, and attacked the assassins. They were speedily put to flight; and one of them was killed by my father's own hand. When they came to examine, they found that it was my mother's own nephew who had fallen—but that she never knew; and, pursuing their journey rapidly, they reached the Palatinate, where, at the town of Franckenthal, the wound my mother had received was first dressed. It was then discovered to be much more serious than had been supposed. She lingered a week, and expired in my father's arms!"

Agnes paused; and Algernon Grey demanded eagerly, "But what became of your father?"

"He hastened hither," continued Agnes, "told his tale to the Electress, who had already been made aware of part, and eagerly besought her countenance and protection for myself. She promised she would be to me as a mother; and she has been so, as you know, Algernon. But my mother's brother, a stern and cruel man, was in high favour with the Queen of

* This is fact, not romance.

France ; and, as soon as it was known my father had found refuge here, the Elector was required to give him up to answer for my cousin's death. Could a fair trial have been expected, he would have surrendered ; but it was known that such was not to be obtained, and he was obliged to fly. He served for several years in distant lands ; and when it was supposed that men's passions had become more calm, he returned to be near his child. You have often seen him—know him well, Algernon. But Duke John of Zweibrücken, who was guardian to the Elector Frederic at the time of his return, insisted that some concealment was still necessary ; and my father, assuming the character of his brother, who had died the year before, has passed ever since for my uncle, in order not to give offence to the court of France."

" I had some suspicion," said Algernon Grey ; " for there has been a tenderness, dear Agnes, in his manner towards you, that nought but the yearnings of paternal love could give.—And now, dearest, we are coming near the castle. I, too, ought to open my

whole heart to your father. I fear, however, there is not time; for, when we came away, he said he was going down to strengthen the defences by the bridge. Send down to him, however, dear girl, and ask him to return. I will wait till the last moment, in order to see him; but I ought to reach Mannheim before it is dark."

The messenger, however, could not find Colonel Herbert. Two hours passed by without his coming; and, having waited with his men mounted in the court till not more than half an hour of daylight remained, Algernon Grey tore himself away and rode on towards Mannheim.

CHAPTER IX.

IN all ages of which we have record, England has been unlike any other country in the world; nor has it been alone in the character of the people, their political institutions, and their religious feelings, that it has differed from all others; but the very aspect of the land has been totally apart, shadowing forth in its very look the mind of the people. We see forests and mountains, rocks, rivers, and cataracts, wide fields and waving corn in other countries; but where else would you see a green bowery lane like that, canopied with boughs and tapestried with flowers, down which those two figures are now walking slowly on? It is England all over—sweet, peaceful, pleasant—

looking England. Though the age is remote from that in which we live; though the costume both of the man and woman is very different from our own; though the plumed hat, and the hanging cloak, and the slashed sleeve, might lead one to suppose one's self amongst Spaniards; yet look at the trees with the ivy creeping up them, the yellow banks, the small fields, the trim hedgerows, and not a doubt remains that the scene is English.

But we must just listen to their conversation, too; and that, alas! is very un-English. We must remember, however, that the age was one when a number of events had tended to corrupt society generally, and the court in particular; when the tone of the human mind, both in Britain and in France, had become debased by the conduct and example of the highest personages in the realm; when the monarch on the throne of England, at least, though learned and witty, presented to his people the pattern of all that is despicable, low, and vicious in a man, all that is hateful and contemptible in a monarch; a tyrant without energy or courage; a de-

bauchee without fire or passion ; a tricky politician, without perspicuity or judgment ; vain of his religion, yet wavering in his doctrines, irreligious in his conduct, and blasphemous in his discourse ; proud of his cunning, yet always deceived and frustrated ; assuming the tone of command, yet led like an infant or a fool ; governed by others, though a despot himself ; and only perfect in grossness, selfishness, and treachery. With such a sovereign ; with minions imitating and despising him ; with a court hungry of gold and avaricious of vice ; with the scaffold and the prison offered as rewards for virtue, energy, and genius ; can we be surprised that the poison spread, more or less, through all classes ; and that the nobles, brought more immediately within the pestilential atmosphere of the court, were peculiarly affected by the moral malady of the time ? Can we wonder that every kind of wickedness which the perverse heart of man can conceive or generate was rife ; that corruption of all kinds was too common to excite attention ; that brawls and murders were heard of every day ; and that the enemy or

the rival, whom the knife could not reach, found death in the platter or cup? Can we wonder that such conversations as the following were heard by the ears of the air?

“He must be disposed of,” said the gentleman, speaking to a lady of extraordinary beauty who walked by his side; “he must be disposed of, that is very clear.”

“Ay, but how is it to be done?” asked the lady. “It is very well for you to counsel me, but give me no help.”

“Nay, sweetest Kate,” replied her companion, “I am willing to give you every help in the world; but I have heard that, during my long and tedious absence from your fair side, you did not fail to console yourself by reasonable tenderness for this same object of your present hate.”

“And do you believe such tales?” she exclaimed, turning her flashing eyes upon him. “You do not, William, you do not! I am the creature of your hands; you have made me what I am. From infancy till now you have tutored and led, guided, commanded me—no,

not commanded, but at least directed ; and you should know—.”

“ For that very reason I do know,” he replied, “ that it is the most natural and likely thing in the world, dear Kate, that you should seek a little consolation for a lover’s absence. I say no more, I imply no more ; for I know that, if real love were in the case, the bold, brave spirit in your heart, guided and directed as you say it has been by me, would even to myself avow the fact, and daringly set all my rage and jealousy at nought. Is it not so, sweet Kate ?”

“ Ay,” she answered with a smile, “ even so.”

“ Well then,” he continued, “ as you see I understand you fully, and neither suspect nor doubt, but only think that in a vacant hour, dull, and for mere idleness, you have trifled with a growing passion in this great lord, till it has risen into a flame which has somewhat scorched the fingers of the kindler—I say it must be by some means drowned out. The only question is how, and that we must consider. But in order to judge of the best means, I must know fully the provocation he has given

my fair love.—Nay, knit not your white brows, dear Kate, with such a puzzled look : I will help you to explanations.”

“ You cannot,” she said; “ there can be no explanations, William Ifford. It suffices to me, and should suffice to you, that he has offended and insulted me—her whom you say you love.”

“ And do love” answered he whom we have hitherto seen under the name of Lovet, “ ay, better far than all the thousand I have loved and been loved by before. But yet it matters much, my Kate; for, if the injury and the insult,—as from something you let drop a day or two ago I do suspect,—touches me in the slightest possible degree, my course is very plain, and I will cut his throat ere the moon be an inch broader. But if it refer to you alone, it might be dangerous to take the step of the duello on such a topic, as giving point to certain rumours of our close friendship which would mar all our plans.”

The lady looked down, bending her large, dark, haughty eyes sternly upon the ground ;

but she murmured in a low tone, "He treated me as he might treat a common harlot; and when I mortified his vanity by cold repulse, he spoke of you, called you my paramour, vowed he could prove the facts and make my shame public to all the world. Now, though I would break, by any means—at any risk, that idle tie to your cold hypocritical cousin Hillingdon, yet I would fain do so without having the finger of every smooth, well-concealed, mock-virtuous woman of the court pointed at me in scorn. He said he could prove it, I tell you.—You start, William, and turn pale: that is not as if your blood fired up like mine."

"My blood has something else to do, bright Kate," answered her cousin. "Why I started was, because your tale awakens a strange doubt in my mind. There was safe in my house, when I left England, a little agate casket with a secret lock, which kept good guard over your dear, long-preserved letters.—Here is the key hanging ever round my neck; but yesterday, when I sought for that casket, I could not find it; and, thinking that it had been mislaid, I

left the search, trusting to meet with it another day. Can any one have stolen those letters?—At all events that man must not live much longer; but, my dear Kate, it will not do to fight on such a cause of quarrel. Nay, moreover, if I seek occasion against him, he will judge rightly of the cause, and spread his tale of scandal to the world,—perhaps produce his proofs, if he really have any. We must employ quieter means, wear a smooth face towards him, and, as we do with a wild beast that we fear, lure him into a trap well prepared beforehand. How did you part, in enmity or calmly?”

The lady had turned very pale as he spoke of the loss of the casket; and some time passed ere she answered his question. He repeated it, however, in a quiet, tender tone; and, looking up she said, “He cowed me—rage sank beneath fear, and I smoothed my brow—nay, even smiled and laughed, in order to gain time, till I could speak with you. But you were long ere you arrived, and now it is too late to perfect any plans. He comes to-morrow evening, and

has promised to bring the proofs he spoke of with him."

"Not too late, not too late," answered her companion. "I will speed home like lightning, search for these letters, be with you again to-morrow early; and then, if you have courage and resolution, we will find means to rid us of one whom we cannot deal with openly. I will have all prepared if you will but second me. Where will my lord your uncle be to-morrow?"

"A hundred miles hence and more," replied the lady. "He and my good aunt, do not return for two days to come."

"Then all will go easily," rejoined the other. "The man must die—he must not reach Royton alive."

"But blood is soon traced," she said, in a tone of hesitation.

"We will have no blood," replied her lover, with a smile: "men die occasionally of very rapid diseases. I will plan it all—you must execute."

"But how shall we get 'the papers from him," asked the lady, "without—"

"That must be cared for," answered Lovet. "You must be tender, my fair Kate, till you have got him to produce his proofs; give him fair hopes, and lead him on. He will sup here, of course; and after supper, when he has trifled with somewhat dangerous viands, bid him show the weighty evidence he spoke of. When they are all spread forth, I will come in, to your surprise and his, and take my own again. Then, if he be inclined to quarrel, one hasty thrust, given ere any one has time to hear his tale, will settle all, and I shall pass blameless for despatching one whom I found insulting my sweet cousin. It will be a claim, too, on her love—a fair motive in the world's eyes for her (in gratitude) to give me her soft hand."

The lady smiled with a meaning look. There was no surprise; there was no horror; there seemed hardly to be any fear. Had her mind been conversant with those ideas before? Who can tell? Such deeds were assuredly common

in that day, and, at all events, they were commonly reported. The rumour of crimes always generates fresh ones of the same character. There is an infection in the very sound of such deeds, and the mind that hears it often catches the moral pestilence and dies. As she thought—and for some moments she did not reply—a look of triumph rose in her glittering eyes. “Ay!” she repeated, “ay! he shall rue it! Yes, he shall rue it!—William, you are right. It would not do to raise a clamour about this man’s death, by taking your usual mode of settling such affairs; but against one thing you must guard right carefully, that his death be not traceable to us—unless, indeed, it be in hasty brawl, where weapons are soon out, and execution done ere men have time to think. I mean, if he quits my house alive, they must not be able to show that it was in the cup, or in the food which he there partook, that he found his fate.”

“I will take care,” said her cousin, significantly; “but you must be both ready and

resolute, my sweet Kate,—no doubt—no hesitation—no weak remorse.”

“I have none!” replied the lady, lifting her hand boldly; “we kill a wolf or a tiger, a snake or a shark. It is the first principle of nature and of right to destroy that which would destroy us. His death is needful to my life. He dies, or I die.—Nay, more; I feel the hunter’s spirit within me, and life, for life, I would rather die myself with him, than not see him die.”

“His offence must have been bitter,” answered her cousin; “though it was very needful to our happiness that Hillingdon should be out of our way, you never thought of using such means with him.”

“I may have thought of it,” answered the lady, musing; “but I would not have done it, William. In moments of eager impatience, I may have wished him dead—nay, have said so, I think, to you; but yet I would have practised nought against his life. Hillingdon never offended me. He loved me not; but, as I loved

him not, that was no offence. His tone was courteous, too, when he did write to me or to my uncle. Plainly and boldly he said he wished the contract dissolved ; but I wished it too, and therefore it was a kindness, not an injury. His very absence, that he might never see me, had—as he turned it, and I believe as he felt it—a certain courtesy. Nay : Hillingdon, though cold and stiff, and opposite in almost everything to my nature and my wishes, is still a high and noble-minded man, a gentleman in heart and spirit.”

Her companion bit his lip, for he loved not to hear his cousin’s praises from that lady’s tongue. He was silent, however, and she proceeded : “ But this man has, indeed, offended me bitterly, as you say. Encouraged by a light smile, and perhaps some idle freedom—I will not deny it—he thought I had become his slave, assumed the air of triumph, boasted, I doubt not, of his conquest amongst drunken comrades, and thought mine was a heart that would bear the insolent tone, the rude assumption of success, the air and words of conquest. Fool ! I taught

him better ; and then he threatened to turn my bold contempt to burning shame—he did more than threaten, William. He it is, and he alone, who has staid the dissolution of my infant marriage with Hillingdon.—The judges were all agreed—the king himself was won, when this man stepped in. The minion persuaded the king, by his cringing arts, to pause.—Nay, look not doubtful ! He told me so himself ; with scornful triumph vowed my fate was in his hands ; and said, if I had not treated him so disdainfully I should have been now as free as air. Do not the facts bear out the assertion ? All that was required by any one was Hillingdon's oath in open court that he had never seen me since I was ten years old. He came and gave it. Then suddenly the king paused and prevaricated, and Algernon returned disgusted and despairing. Have I not cause to say this man is a viper in my way ? Have I not a right to set my heel upon his head ?”

“ Assuredly ! ” replied William Ifford ; “ and the sooner the better, my sweet Kate. I see that your mind is made up and your courage

equal to the task. He sups here; he will dine at Hertford, at the inn there. I will take care—though the deed cannot be done there on account of the many eyes upon us—that some circumstance of suspicion shall occur at Hertford to direct the doubts of men afterwards away from your house. I have a powder brought from Italy, which I have heard has been most serviceable in the great house of Medici. May it prove as useful to us! And now farewell, my Kate. I will not go up to the mansion with you, as I must return to-morrow morning. Do not pause and ponder on our plans, lest your resolution fail.”

“No fear!” she answered, with a calm look; “my courage is firmer than you think, William. Adieu!”

Sir William Ifford left her, and walked back to a village about half a mile distant, where he had left his horse. At first he went quick, as if in haste; but after he had turned out of the lane his pace became slower, and he meditated, murmuring a part of his thoughts as he proceeded. “A dangerous housekeeper!” he said;

“and yet a glorious creature—not the most faithful in her loves, I fear—yet how can I blame her? I have not been right faithful myself—and she was alone. We will both do better when we are wedded.—There must be more in this affair than she thinks fit to own—she could not hate so strongly had she not somewhat loved. Well, when he is dead that will be wiped out; her own hand will avenge both herself and me. Yet it is hardly politic to teach her tricks which she may practise hereafter on myself.—I am a bold man to link myself to one so well tutored; but for such a woman, and for such a fortune, who would not be bold? All that will be needed is care for the future,—and a sure antidote in my doublet pocket.”

Full of such reflections, he reached the village, and, mounting his horse, rode on to a house which, with the small estate around it, had descended to him from his mother. His patrimonial property had been long spent, and even this was not unencumbered. Springing to the ground, he mounted the six steps which led up into an arched porch covered with ivy, opened

the door, and went in. A servant was called and ordered to bring a fresh horse, and then William Ifford paused a moment in the hall, bending his eyes upon the marble pavement in deep meditation. It seemed of a very gloomy character too. Perhaps it was remorse that moved him ; for the heart, however sunk in vice and folly, shrinks from the touch of a new crime. Rarely does it happen that it is so corrupted that there is not some sound spot left somewhere ; and so long as there is, that part will tremble at the first touch of the corroding poison which has destroyed all the rest. His brow became very cloudy, and gathered thick over his deep, keen eye ; his lip quivered ; and the fingers of the hand which had fallen by his side were seen to move slowly together, till they were clenched firmly in the palm. The light, the scoffing, and the scornful will have their moments of thought, of doubt, and of depression, as the vicious of regret. There comes upon us all, against our will, we know not how, we know not whence, a shadow as from the gloomy, inevitable rock before us, clouding the

sparkling sunny path in which we sported, rendering the gay dreams gloomy, and the clear future obscure. It is the time to ask ourselves, whither that path tends, where those sports may end. But still the counteracting power of evil, waging his eternal war against all good, suggests some reason, presents some excuse for following the impulse of the wilful heart along the course of error; till at length, when all warnings have been given, and every opportunity neglected, the toils of our own acts close round us; and, in the inextricable net which we ourselves have aided to weave, we struggle in vain; till death takes us forth, and an unknown state begins.

Slowly and even sadly Sir William Ifford raised his eyes and cast a melancholy glance around the dim old hall. There was an air of desolation and neglect about it, very different from the gay and splendid scenes in which he was accustomed and loved to move. The look of poverty was stamped upon it; and in an instant flashed before his eyes the image of a long future of care and penury, and forced self-

denial and niggardly restraint. "It must be," he cried, "it must be done;" and, hurrying to an old oaken cabinet, which he opened with one of the keys he wore about him, took out an extremely minute vial filled with some white substance, and gazed at it attentively for an instant; then, placing it in his pocket, he entered his bed-chamber, and drew forth from a large chest a masker's beard, nearly white, and several separate locks of silver hair. With these, put safely up, he rode away towards the town of Hertford, which he reached shortly after nightfall; but, before he entered the street, he fastened the false locks to the lining of his hat and brought them over his forehead and his neck. The beard completed a disguise sufficiently close to prevent any eyes, but such as knew him very well, from recognising him; and then, entering the town, he dismounted at a small public house, and walked on foot towards the principal inn in the great street. About half an hour after, he might be seen speaking in the court-yard to a man in a white night-cap and apron. Their conversation seemed merry, too;

for few even knew better how to assume familiar courtesies towards the lower classes, when he liked it, than William Ifford.

“ You foolish dog,” he cried, at length ; “ will you lose a good gold piece just for your vanity in your art ? I tell you it is for a bet with him. I vowed I would make him eat bitter pottage ere a week were over ; and I ask you not to do aught that can hurt him. There’s many an innocent herb, and salutary too, that tastes like soot in the mouth. Take your choice of them, and stuff his pottage and the first two dishes full of it. Go out into the garden and get some bitter endive, or any other purifier of the blood. So will you be sure that no harm can come of it. I must have it done, however ; and here is a gold piece for your pains.”

The man seemed still to hesitate ; but William Ifford doubled the offered bribe, and the cook’s virtue could not resist the temptation.

“ Keep your own counsel,” said the gentleman, as he left him, “ and all is safe. I shall laugh heartily to-morrow night, when I hear him curse the bitter soup he had at Hertford.”

Thus saying, he turned away, mounted his horse again and rode back. On the following morning early he was once more by the Lady Catherine's side; and for two long hours they talked eagerly with meaning looks, but in low tones, as if they feared to be overheard, although they well knew that no ear was near to hear them. But there is a consciousness in crime of an ever open eye, an ear that is never closed.

CHAPTER X.

“YES, sir, yes,” said the King of England lolling upon his left leg, and sticking out his right hip, as if he had dislocated the joint, at the same time thrusting one hand into the wide open pocket of his black velvet hose, “yes, sir, ye had better gang your way back. As ye ’ve staid awa sae lang, I think ye may stay awa a while mair. We’ll just conseeder o’ the matter—haud your tongue, Steenie, nane o’ yer clavers; I ’ve said the word!”

The Duke of Buckingham, who had stepped forward, as if to speak, drew back again with a very significant and uncourtier like look of disgust and impatience; but Buckingham by this time rested the ladder of ambition rather

upon the favour of the Prince than of the King, and feared not every now and then to express his dissent somewhat boldly from the Monarch's views.

James's words were addressed to Algernon, Earl of Hillingdon, who stood before him in the midst of a circle of courtiers and flatterers somewhat surprised at the cold, careless, determined manner of the young peer.

The Monarch ended his sentence; but then, seeing that the young lord did not withdraw, he added somewhat sharply: "God's life, man! you shall know our pleasure when it is time."

"I hope your Majesty's pleasure may be to do me justice," answered Algernon Grey; "but, by your gracious permission, I must add a few words before I go. Famous lawyers, bearing high offices in your royal court, have pronounced this marriage null by reason of the age of the contracting parties. Ecclesiastical judges, appointed by yourself, have come to the same conclusion. Your Majesty hesitates, from some scruples, to suffer the sentence to be pronounced; but let me add, that I must by some

means soon learn whether this contract, entered into in my infancy, is a marriage or not. If not, I have nought to say; for all parties are free. But if the law pronounces it a marriage, I must, without loss of time, move my peers for a divorce, on account of the lady's adultery with a person high in your royal favour."

"Hout, tout!" cried the King, with his sallow face flushing, and his thick lips quivering, while his large tongue rolled round and round in his mouth, as if he had a plum, or some other extraneous substance therein; "By God! you shall have neither one, nor the other. What! are we not oursels the supreme head both of the church and the law, God's vicergerent in this puir kingdom of England! Awa wi' ye, sir; and let me hear nae mair. Tak the man awa;" and with a blasphemous oath he added: "ye'll drive me daft."

Prince Charles advanced to his father's side and tried to calm him; while the Duke of Buckingham took the Earl's arm and led him gently from the King's presence.

"Go, Hillingdon, go," he said; "and do not enrage him more. We will do the best for

you.—You have said too much already, my lord.”

“Not more than was needful to say, Duke,” replied Algernon Grey, somewhat sharply; but then, feeling that irritation had made him ungracious towards a man who had exerted himself strenuously in his behalf, he took Buckingham’s hand, adding, “Pardon me, your Grace, I thank you a thousand times for all that you have done; but it moves me, I do confess, to see a pitiful, unworthy, ungentlemanly upstart, like this Lord Marston, have power to pervert the course of justice and impede the operation of the law. This is a bitter disappointment to me altogether; and your Grace must pardon something in a man so circumstanced.”

“I do, I do,” answered Buckingham; “and I counsel you but for your own advantage. Leave the kingdom as soon as may be, and trust to me and his Royal Highness.” He paused an instant; and then, laying his hand on Algernon’s arm, he added, with a proud and significant air, “This man is my enemy, as well as yours! Is not that sufficient?”

"Methinks, it ought to be," said Algernon Grey; "but in this strange world, where merit and unworthiness, wisdom and folly, seem alternately to succeed, as if upon the chances of the dice, one may be permitted always to doubt what will come next. However, I will follow your Grace's advice; and, repeating my thanks, withdraw."

"The sooner the better," replied Buckingham; "for the Tower is near at hand; and your best friends might find it difficult to keep you out, if the King be wilful; or to get you out, if once in."

Thus saying, he turned away; and Algernon Grey retired from the palace, and proceeded to his house on the bank of the river, in what is, and was then called, the Strand.

"Pack up everything for instant departure, Tony," he said, speaking to his old servant, who opened the door of his bed-room for him. "Let the barge be ready in half an hour, and call a wherry up to the stairs at the end of the garden. See that all the men be warned that they will have to embark to-night on board the 'Mary Anne,' for Rotterdam."

The good man looked in his lord's face, and for a moment was inclined to ask,—“Has all been settled to your satisfaction?” but the expression of Algernon's countenance was answer sufficient; and, without a word, he retired to make the arrangements required. It is strange the influence of the character of a master upon servants and dependants. There be some men, who, without any effort to conciliate or win regard, seem to command it; and their joys or sorrows diffuse themselves around, as it were in eddies, to the utmost limit of those who know them. A few words from the old servant, as he communicated his lord's commands to the rest of the household, spread gloom over the whole; and the attendants went about their preparations with a sad and sorrowful air, as if each had received some personal disappointment.

At the end of half an hour, Algernon Grey issued forth from his chamber with several written papers in his hand. They were merely orders, which he was more inclined to write than to speak. The greater part of his attendants were to accompany him to Germany; but were to wait where they were an

hour or two for the return of his barge, which was now ready to convey him, with six or seven whom he had selected, to a vessel about to sail for the mouth of the Rhine. The rest were to remain in London till they heard farther. Some stores of arms, not yet ready, were to be sent after him to Germany in another vessel. Especial care was ordered to be taken of his tenantry, and of two or three old pensioners of the family; and, according to a laudable custom of that time, which the law of Elizabeth had not altogether abrogated, a certain sum was to be distributed in weekly alms to any deserving poor.

Several of his principal servants delayed his departure for a short time by asking directions in various matters which he had not remembered; but ere an hour and a half had passed, after he had quitted the palace, he was floating on the broad bosom of the Thames; and, in about half an hour more, had embarked for Rotterdam. His followers showed zealous punctuality in joining him without delay. Baggage and arms were embarked safely; and, with the first tide that night the ship dropped

down the river. The passage could hardly be called fair, for it blew a gale from river-mouth to river-mouth ; but the wind was favourable, and speed was all he cared for.

Often he asked himself, however, why he should so eagerly press forward ; what but pain and grief lay before him ; what he had to communicate to her he best loved, but doubt, uncertainty, and disappointment ; and yet the thought of seeing her again, of holding her hand in his—of gazing into those beautiful and speaking eyes—of reading there love, and hope, and confidence—of gaining new trust for the future from her very look, drew him onward, and formed at least one bright spot in the future, which all the cares and sorrows that surrounded him had no power to cloud. Then, again, at times, he would revolve all that had taken place in England since he had again visited his native land ; and he would ask himself, with doubt, whether all had been fair in the conduct of those who professed themselves his friends, and pretended to support his cause. Whether Buckingham was sincere,—whether Prince Charles himself had not been deceiving

him? and then he would accuse himself of mean suspicions, and try to cast them from his mind. There was one point, indeed, on which the more he thought, the more he doubted. Had the Lady Catherine's family, though affecting to urge the nullification of the marriage, really exerted themselves to the utmost? They were powerful; in high favour at court, and he could not but remember that the contract between the lady and himself, while both were mere children, had been first proposed by the very uncle with whom she now lived, — a man not very pure in morals, and ambitious in character. Ere he reached the shores of Holland, he resolved to take one step more, to write to the Lady Catherine herself, and, telling her he had done all he could to set her free from an engagement she detested, leave her to move her own relations to exert themselves more strenuously than before. He would trust the letter, he thought, to his old servant and the page, — the one having many friends in the household to which he was sent, from whom he was sure to learn much of the past; the other being of a character almost too remarking, who would form a very sure notion

of the disposition of all parties at present. He gave them no orders, indeed, to inquire or to observe, but simply sent them back to England with the letter, as soon as his foot touched the shore, desiring them to obtain an answer, and hasten to join him at Heidelberg.

The voyage up the Rhine, in those days, was slow and difficult; but for some way the strife which was then actually going on in the Low Countries, deterred him from landing; and it was only when he reached the first state of the Protestant Union that he disembarked with his followers, and took his way forward on horseback. Many difficulties and impediments delayed him on the road; and rumours continually reached him of the movements of contending armies in the Palatinate, some true, and many false. He gathered, however, from all accounts, that the temporary prosperity which had visited the arms of the King of Bohemia had by this time passed away; that Mansfeld had retreated into Alsace; that the Prince of Orange had been recalled to Holland; that greater discord than ever reigned among the united princes, and that Horace Vere and

his troops, nearly confined to the town of Mannheim and its immediate neighbourhood, could effect little or nothing, against a superior force led by one of the first generals of the age. Tilly, with the united Bavarian, Austrian, and Spanish armies, ranged and ravaged the Palatinate without check. Frankenthal, indeed, resisted still; but there was no power in the open field to protect the villages from oppression, or to maintain the smaller towns against the invader. Every report he received was more or less gloomy; and by some it was stated that Heidelberg itself was menaced, while others represented that the city was already invested.

All these accounts but served to make the young Englishman press more eagerly forward. The men, as well as their horses, were wearied with the rapid advance; but they did not complain, for they all comprehended the feelings in their lord's bosom; and there was sufficient of chivalry, even in the lower classes of that day, to make them think it would be hard that he should be kept from the lady whom he loved, simply because they were tired.

Thus, on the ninth day after they had reached Rotterdam, they entered the dominions of the Elector Palatine ; and, after a weary march through the plains of the Rhine, with no intelligence but vague rumours amongst the peasantry, they reached, towards nightfall, a large village about eight miles from Mannheim, and somewhat more from Heidelberg. During the last day's journey, sad traces of the ravages of war had been apparent at every step. Villages burnt, houses and churches in ruins, and here and there a dead body lying unburied within a few yards of the road, had marked the devastating course ; but the village that they now approached seemed to have escaped better than most of those they had met with ; and a barricade drawn across the end of the little street showed that it had been prepared for defence by one or other of the contending parties. A number of the peasantry, armed with heavy arquebusses, presented themselves to the eyes of Algernon Grey just within the barricade ; and a loud call to halt and keep off was almost instantly followed by two or three unceremonious shots, which, luckily, did not

take effect. Bidding his men retire a little, the young Englishman rode on alone, and was suffered to approach the barrier; but, though he spoke to the peasants in German, begging shelter and repose for at least a few hours, his foreign accent created suspicion; and, with a sagacious shake of the head, the leader of the peasantry told him that they knew better.

"Well, my brave man," answered Algernon Grey, "you seem to be frightened by a very small number; I have not thirty men with me in all; and, if I were an enemy, it would be much more dangerous for me to trust myself within your place than for you to let me in; however, if I must ride on to Heidelberg with weary men and horses, it cannot be helped; but you are not serving your Prince, I can tell you; for I am one of the King's officers, and was with him in Prague."

"Heidelberg!" said the peasant; "I doubt that you will get in. Whom do you want in Heidelberg?"

"Either Colonel Herbert or the Baron of Oberntraut," answered the young Englishman.

"The Baron of Oberntraut!" said the good

man, eyeing the other from head to foot; "you may find him without going to Heidelberg—perhaps sooner than you like, if you be what I think."

"Whatever you may think," answered Algernon Grey, "I cannot find him sooner than I should like."

"Well, then, I will send for some one to show you where he is," replied the peasant. "It is not far; and he has two hundred good Reiters with him." Thus saying, he turned to the people who surrounded him, and whispered a word or two to a light, active lad. The latter instantly laid down his arquebuse, and ran full speed up the village.

"The Baron is in the place, my good friend," said Algernon Grey at once. "I understand it all; so you can have no objection to open your barrier and let me in alone to speak with him."

But the worthy peasant was a very cautious man; and he would not venture even upon so safe a step till, in about five minutes, Oberntraut himself was seen coming down the street on foot; the next moment Algernon's hand was grasped in his. The men were brought into

the village and obtained some scanty refreshment; and in the mean time, while night fell rapidly, the two gentlemen walked up and down before the church in eager conversation. Algernon Grey now learned that Tilly, reinforced by a large detachment from the army of the Archduke, had been for the last three days drawing nearer and nearer to Heidelberg, evidently with the intention of besieging that city.

“He has not men enough to invest it entirely,” said Oberntraut; “but, alas! there are too few in the place to defend it long against the force he has.”

“Then I will go on to-night,” answered Algernon Grey; “under such circumstances every arm is something.”

“Your men may indeed give assistance,” said the young Baron; “mine are only accustomed to the open field and their horses’ backs; therefore they can be of more service without than within. I will give you escort, however, as far as Neunheim; for the way is not without danger.”

“Where does Tilly lie?” asked Algernon

Grey. "It would take a large force to close all communication with the town."

"The last news showed all his foot at Rohrbach," answered Oberntraut, "and his horse scattered about by Wiesloch, Russloch, and Wieblingen. There are few parties, if any, on this side of the Neckar; but they cross from time to time, especially at night; so that it will be better that I and my people should go with you. We may, perhaps, gain some advantage by the way."

In the latter expectation, however, Oberntraut was disappointed. The whole forces of the Bavarian general remained on the other side of the Neckar; and Algernon and Oberntraut, with their several forces, reached Neunheim without seeing any human beings, except a few of the unfortunate peasantry, who fled across the fields as soon as they heard the sound of horses' feet.

Furnished with the pass-word, Algernon Grey presented himself at the gates of the bridge, and was immediately recognised by the officer on guard, who had seen him before at Prague. The news spread amongst the soldiery of a

reinforcement having come to the aid of the garrison; the word passed from mouth to mouth over the bridge and into the city. Some of the boys and the students, who were loitering about, took it up; a little crowd collected, gathering as it went, and accompanied the English party with loud cheers to the gates of the castle.

The sounds reached Agnes Herbert, as she sat sad and lonely in her own chamber; and, with the presentiment of love, a glow spread over her cheek; a thrill passed through her whole frame; and, leaning her head upon her hand, she wept under the struggle of hope and fear. Some time passed by, however; and every thing remained quiet and sad; for Algernon Grey had been, in the first instance, led to the apartments of the governor Merven, which lay in a distant part of the castle. Hope gave way to apprehension: "I have deceived myself," she thought; "it is not he! The place will be invested; and he will not be able to force his way in;" but at the end of half an hour, there were rapid steps heard coming along the corridor. She knew her father's foot; but there was another, too, the tread of which was hardly

less familiar to her ear. Joy overpowered her more than sorrow had ever done. She could not rise—she could not move from her chair; but, with her eyes raised, her hands clasped, her bosom heaving with the quick, short breath of expectation, she gazed towards the door. The next moment there was a light knock; she had hardly strength to say, “Come in;” but, whether he heard the words or not, Herbert threw it open and drew back to let her lover pass in first.

What a painful thing is the struggle between the natural feelings of the heart and the conventional modes of life! Had Agnes given way to what she felt, she would have sprung to Algernon’s arms and poured forth her love upon his bosom; but she dared not; and, rising with timid grace, her cheek flushed with emotion, and eyes in which the tears would scarcely be restrained, she glided forward, with her fair hand extended.

He took it and pressed his hands upon it warmly, tenderly, eagerly; but she remarked at once that there was a melancholy shade upon his brow, a look of sadness in his eyes.

What could it mean? she asked herself. A letter, received ten days before, breathed nothing but hope and joyful expectation; it had told of difficulties overcome, of all obstacles removed, of a clear course towards love, and union, and happiness. Whence could that sadness proceed, then? It must arise from the dangerous position of the town; from the thoughts of the approaching siege; from a knowledge of the weakness of the garrison; from the apprehension of danger to those he loved; from any thing—any thing, Agnes was willing to believe, but new obstacles, fresh barriers having risen up between him and her. Every thing but that was light to her. Perils she feared not; privations she was ready to endure; but upon the thought of disappointed love she dared not suffer her mind to rest even for a moment.

No time, however, was given for explanation; for, after a very few words had been spoken, Herbert took her lover's arm, saying, "There, my dear child, I was resolved that you should see our friend safe and well; but now I must go to visit the new redoubt I am throwing

up behind the Alte Schloss; for it must be carried on night and day; and he has promised to go with me."

Thus saying, he turned to the door; but Algernon Grey lingered yet for a moment, saying, in a low voice, "I must find a moment to speak with you alone to-morrow, dearest Agnes. Matters do not proceed so quickly as I could wish, but all will go well, I trust.

The door closed upon them, and Agnes Herbert sank into her seat again, and sadly covered her eyes with her hand. Oh, how often in life is the long looked-for moment of joy alloyed by bitter disappointment!

CHAPTER XI.

THE wind was from the west, the grey morning dawning calm, and somewhat hazy. Few eyes were open in the castle of Heidelberg, except those of the sentinels on the walls; and amongst those who slept soundest, strange to say, was Algernon Grey. He was wearied with long exertion and fatigue; he was wearied with anxiety and thought; he was wearied with several months' strife between hope and fear; and now, when a brief period of repose had come, when there seemed a pause in his fate, when no exertion on his part could advance or retard whatever events Fate had in store for the future, he slept profoundly—for many hours dreamlessly—till, towards the morning, faint and fleeting visions of Agnes Herbert in danger and

distress crossed his mind, changing like the forms of clouds borne over the summer sky. Suddenly, something, he knew not what, awoke him from his sleep, and he gazed round bewildered. For an instant he knew not where he was; but then he heard a faint and distant sound like that of a slowly beaten drum, and he murmured, "Surely that is the noise of fire-arms." Starting out of bed, he flung on a loose furred dressing-gown, and threw open the door of the ante-room. His servants were already up; the outer door was open, and a man was looking out.

"What is that noise, Stephen Graves?" exclaimed the young Earl, anxiously. "Run and gain intelligence."

"They say it is the enemy," my lord, replied the man, "who have attacked the redoubt called the Ape's Nest, and the new trench you went to see last night. Colonel Herbert has hurried up already;—but I will soon get farther news;" and away he ran.

It was the first act of the siege; and Algeron Grey, while he armed himself in haste, felt that strange sort of impression which is ever produced by the commencement of any great

and decisive transaction, long delayed and expected, in which we are destined to bear a part. The siege of Heidelberg had begun. How was it to end? he asked himself. What might be the fate of himself and of those he held most dear, before the final scene of the tragedy then commencing? But although deep reflection and strong feeling were inherent in his character, yet energetic activity was the predominant quality of his nature. Thought never made him pause or hesitate; and, as no particular post had as yet been assigned to him, he resolved at once to hasten as a volunteer to the point assailed, and render the best service in his power.

His men were speedily gathered together, and the arms of the soldiers of that period were caught up and donned; when, just as they were descending to the court, the loud, dull boom of a piece of ordnance was heard, and a cannon-ball striking the wall above, some heavy pieces of stone fell down across the windows.

"They have won the redoubt, my lord," said one of the men, pausing, and turning round to speak to Algernon Grey.

"Never mind," answered the young noble-

man ; "it can be won back again. Come on !" and, passing to the head of the troop, he led them down into the court, and through what was called the fore-yard of Louis the Fifth's palace, by a passage which led by the side of the library-tower to the upper casemate, and to the conduit-casemate ; thence through the kitchen gardens and the pheasant garden, out to the mount-fort, where the new trench commenced. As they went, another and another cannon-shot was heard ; but the balls whistled high over their heads towards the castle and the town. Several soldiers were met hurrying back towards the fortress ; and two of them, carrying in their arms a wounded man, paused, both to rest themselves for an instant, and to tell their advancing comrades that the Ape's Nest and the new trench had just been carried by the enemy.

Algernon Grey made no long halt, however, but hurried on to the southern gorge, or entrance of the small octagonal fort, where he found Colonel Herbert directing a furious fire from two small pieces of cannon and about fifty arquebuses, upon the trench which ran towards the half-finished redoubt.

"Ah ! my noble friend !" he cried, as soon as

he saw the Earl ; “this is kind help, and much needed. They have attacked us sooner than we thought, driven out the masons and the few soldiers who were working there ; and, worse than all, captured all the beeves which the peasants had gathered up here for the supply of the castle.”

“Methinks we can retake the trench and the redoubt,” said Algernon Grey, gazing forth, and shading his eyes with his hand from the light of the eastern sun, “perhaps even recapture the cattle ; for that is a serious loss. Cover us with a sharp fire ; and I will undertake to regain the works with my own men, provided there be not strong reinforcements beyond that wood.”

“None, none,” replied Herbert ; “they have not three companies on the ground.”

“Upon them, then !” cried Algernon Grey. “Stephen Graves, array the men at the little stockade below—quick ! for they are coming along the trench. Now, my gallant friend, let your fire be directed beyond that little mound of earth in the trench till we reach it, and then cease. You can send out a party to support us, if you see need and have men enough. If

you were to put some small balls into that falconet, and brought it to sweep the trench, it would cover us well. Jam them down close, or you will burst the gun."

Thus saying, the young nobleman ran down to his men below, and, ere the cannon he had pointed to could be charged, was seen issuing forth with his men into the trench. The Spaniards and Bavarians were now gathering fast beyond musket-shot in the other end, prepared to rush forward to the attack of the octagon fort, and presented a firm front across the trench, jostling man against man, with their arms and steel caps glittering in the sun. Two guns, however, besides the falconet, had been brought to bear upon the trench from above, and Herbert himself, ordering the cannoneers to pause, aimed the latter with a keen and experienced eye, and then adjusted one of the other pieces of ordnance. He had not time to give his own attention to the third; for Algernon Grey put his men into the charge; and, with sharp pikes lowered, the sturdy Englishmen rushed on. They were now not two hundred yards from their opponents; and the word to meet them at the same place had been given

to the Bavarian infantry, when the report of three guns from the fort, discharged rapidly one after the other, was heard. One ball tore through the close ranks of Tilly's soldiers like a hurricane through a forest, laying a number of strong men low in a moment; another struck the edge of the trench beside them, and covered the Bavarians with earth and rubbish; and in the midst of the confusion that followed, a shower of half-pound shot, fitted for what was then called the wall-petronel, completed the disarray. Then came the firm charge of the English, and in a minute or two the trench was swept from end to end, and Algernon Grey and his men rushed with the scattered enemy into the redoubt of the Ape's Nest which had been taken an hour before. Here, however, the struggle became more fierce; for a company of Spanish foot, fresh and in good order, advanced to cover the flight of their allies; the Bavarians rallied behind them, and for a few minutes Algernon with thirty men had to contend with a force of five times that number. The English, however, had the impulse of attack and success with them; the half-completed mounds of the redoubt afforded the enemy no shelter;

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the first shock drove the Spaniards back, though still in fair array; and ere they could recover their ground Herbert himself and a party of Palatinate troops poured in and completed the victory.!

In rout and confusion the adversaries' forces were driven down the slopes of earth which had been thrown up, and fresh troops arriving from the castle and the fort, the pursuit was continued so sharply that neither Spaniards nor Bavarians had time to rally. Flying in confusion, some towards the Wolfswell, some towards the Königstuhl, a number were slain by those who followed them, and at a little distance, beyond a small wood which was then called the Cammerwald, the whole drove of oxen, which had been carried off in the morning, was recaptured, and the poor herds who had been made prisoners liberated.

A halt of the Palatinate troops was then ordered, for no one knew where the chief force of Tilly was posted, and to both Herbert and Algernon Grey it seemed impossible to conceive that so experienced a commander would suffer so small a force as that which had attacked the redoubt, to advance far without support.

“You go back with the men to the fort,” said the young nobleman after some consultation, “I will proceed with a small party to reconnoitre, and bring you intelligence soon.”

Algernon Grey sent but did not bring intelligence; for with efforts of the mind, as with those of the body, it is not always possible to check a strong impulse at once. A man runs towards a particular object; but unless something arrests his progress, he is sure to run beyond it. Finding no large body of the enemy within sight, after having gone more than a mile in the direction of the position Tilly was reported to occupy the night before, the young Englishman was led on to reconnoitre further. Guided by one of the soldiers of the castle, whom Herbert had given him as a companion, and followed by eight or ten men, he glided through the woods upon the Königstuhl, taking advantage of every rocky point to examine accurately the ground below; and not even satisfied with the knowledge thus obtained, he determined to descend and approach as close as possible to Rohrbach and Wiesloch, where the enemy's principal force of infantry was supposed to be quartered.

The ground, which is at present covered with

vineyards climbing half way up the hill, was then shaded with thick woods ; and under shelter of their branches, at that season in full leaf, the young Englishman approached to within about a quarter of a mile of Rohrbach, where the orchards and plum gardens rested upon the verge of the forest. Pausing on a small spur of the hill, which the guide called the Badger's-haunt — I know not by what name it goes now-a-days—Algernon Grey leaned against one of the large oaks, and gazed down below, hearing some voices speaking, evidently not far off. Clouds had come over the sun ; and for a moment he could not discover the persons who were speaking ; but moving a little to one side, the glittering of a steel cap caught his eyes, and the white head-gear of a country girl. Another slight change of position showed him a Bavarian sentinel, talking with a young woman of the Palatinate ; and, to say truth, making somewhat warmer love than is common with his countrymen of the present day. Turning round to his companions with a smile, he very hard-heartedly proposed to carry off the poor sentinel from his pleasant relaxation, in order to obtain, at leisure, whatever information he could afford.

No great difficulties presented themselves to the undertaking ; for the man had been placed to guard a little hollow way leading up into the wood, and had wandered a few steps from his post in order to enjoy the conversation of his fair friend unobserved. On the other side was a plum-garden, fenced by a stone wall, with a break in it ; and, dividing his men into two parties, Algernon Grey, with four companions, glided quietly down the hollow way under cover of the bank ; while the other party crept on amidst the plum-trees, till they reached the break. The soldier had laid down his arquebuse for a moment or two ; and, ere he could recover it, which he attempted to do, at the first sound of a footfall, he was seized ; and, with a pistol at his head and an injunction to keep silence, was dragged up into the woods.

Without pausing to question him at the time, lest the woman, who had been left behind, should give the alarm, the young Englishman took his way back to the castle, through different paths from those by which he had gone forth ; but the whole day had been consumed in these proceedings, and the sun was setting when he reached the small fort of the Ape's Nest. Herbert was no longer there. The soldiers in the redoubt

declared that all had passed quietly ; and the reconnoitring party proceeded in the twilight to the castle, where their long absence had caused some uneasiness, although a messenger had been sent about mid-day to say that no great movement could be observed in the enemy's forces.

The examination of the prisoner took place immediately ; and from his answers it was found that, according to a general report in Tilly's camp, the siege would be regularly commenced on the following day, and the principal point of attack would be the Ape's Nest, and the high ground around it. A road had been prepared, the man said, for transporting the artillery ; and several large pieces of ordnance had that very day been carried a considerable way up the mountain, with less difficulty than had been anticipated.

Thus went by the first day after Algernon Grey's return to Heidelberg ; and in the whole course thereof not more than an hour was passed in the society of her he loved : nor was that without drawback, from the presence of many others, as they sat at supper in Colonel Herbert's tower.

Ten persons were assembled round the table

at a late hour, comprising Merven, the general governor of the place, and the principal officers of the German, English, and Dutch troops. Though Algernon was placed next to Agnes, with Merven on the other side, but a few words could pass between them unheard by all. Algernon Grey, however, did not lose the opportunity, but whispered in a low tone, while the conversation was going on loud around, "Come down hither, dear girl, early to-morrow, ere your father goes forth; I wish to speak with you both; for, in the dangers which are approaching, there should be no doubt on any part—nothing unexplained—no hesitation, no fear."

Agnes merely bowed her head; for, the moment Algernon concluded, the governor addressed her on some ordinary subject, and all private communication between her and her lover was over for the night.

At eleven o'clock the party rose, and most of the guests retired; but Merven, ere he went, took both Herbert's hands frankly in his, saying, "There is something on my mind, my noble friend; and as we shall all soon be at hard blows with the enemy, I cannot go into the strife without saying it. By every right you should have the command here; and I am sure

Horace Vere was not aware that you had made up your mind to stand the brunt of this siege, after having fought so well in other places, or he would have offered it to you; but let us divide our labours and our authority. Take which you will for your own particular post, the castle or the town. I will take the other, and we can hold council together upon all great affairs."

Herbert turned away his head for a moment, but left his hand in Merven's; and then, returning the friendly pressure, he said, "The castle for me. It has been my dwelling for many a year. I have bestowed much pains in strengthening it. It has become a sort of plaything to me—a pet, a favourite, and I would fain stand by it while it stands, or perish with it."

"So be it, then," answered the other. "I will defend the town, and have no thought of letting it fall. No gloomy anticipations, Herbert. We will try, at least, to repel the enemy, and doubt not we shall succeed, and all live to remember our united efforts with pride and satisfaction."

Herbert shook his head gravely, though it could not be called sadly. "It is all in God's

hand, good friend," he said. "Death never strikes without authority."

"And God protects the right," answered Merven; "so we will not doubt. I suppose, my lord, you will remain in the castle with your men: but come with me for a moment to my lodging ere you go to bed.—I have some news for you from England, brought by a special messenger, in a letter to Mannheim, since you left our native land."

Algernon Grey's eye lightened with fresh hopes; for love had wrought a change in him; and, whereas he had long given way to despondency, the tendency of his mind had now again become hopeful. As soon as they reached the governor's lodging, Merven put a letter in his hand, signed Horace Vere, and pointed to a particular passage, "Tell the Earl of Hillingdon," so the paragraph ran, "that I have news from the Duke of Buckingham, of the third of this month: he states that there is good hope for the Earl in his cause. The new favourite is getting out of favour, has absented himself from the Royston party without the King's leave, and has been roughly handled in discourse. These advantages improved may

remedy all that has gone amiss in the Earl's case; and Buckingham declares that he may trust to him and the Prince for the result."

Such were the tidings which sent Algernon Grey to rest with a heart somewhat relieved; but still many an anxious apprehension crossed his mind, and kept him waking for more than an hour.

He resolved, however, to lose no time in communicating to Colonel Herbert the exact position in which he stood. To Agnes's uncle he might not have felt himself bound by the same rules which affected him towards her father; but he determined, whatever might be the result, he would not keep the parent of her he loved in ignorance of his painful situation.

All such resolutions—indeed, all human resolutions—are the sport of circumstances; and, in the present case, he could not perform that which he had determined to do. Early on the following morning, he knocked at the door of the English officer's saloon. It was the sweet voice of Agnes that bade him enter; and her first intelligence was that her father had already gone forth to the outworks.

"I told him," she said, "that you wished to

see him, that you had something to communicate to him of importance: nay, that it referred to me and my happiness; but he would not stay. He replied, that the defence of the place was the first thing to be thought of; that he did not wish his mind to be distracted from his task by any other considerations; that he trusted entirely to my own judgment and feelings; and that, whatever I promised he would confirm. I think he mistook the nature of the communication you had to make, Algernon; that he thought it simply a matter of form; but yet I could not make up my mind to press it upon him; for when excited by such events as are now taking place, he is impatient of any opposition, and gives his whole heart and soul entirely up to what he considers to be his duty as a soldier. Whatever you have to tell, I do think it will be better to reserve it till this siege is over, or at least till we are compelled by other circumstances."

"First hear what it is," replied Algernon Grey, "and then judge; for I must not have him say at a future period, that I acted dishonourably by him;" and he proceeded to relate all the events that had occurred to him while absent in England. He showed her that he

had formally applied for the nullification of the marriage, to which he had been a hardly conscious party in his boyhood ; that no opposition had been made, but that a similar petition had been addressed to the courts by the Lady Catherine herself ; that, after some difficulties, all obstacles had been swept away ; and that nothing had been required but his oath, corroborated by other testimony, that he had not seen the lady since she was nine years old ; that having gone to England to prove the fact, the judges appointed had come to a unanimous decision ; and that his expectations and hopes were raised to the highest pitch, when suddenly the King had interfered, and forbidden the sentence from being promulgated. The causes which were supposed to have led to this tyrannical conduct on the part of James, he could not fully detail to ears so pure as those which heard him ; but he hinted that a new favourite of the monarch's had been the moving cause, from some base motives of his own ; and that he had good hope of this new and painful obstacle being speedily removed.

Agnes listened attentively, in deep, sad thought. She asked no questions, for she feared that if she did, the bitter disappointment

which she felt would show itself too plainly. When he had done, however, after a short pause, to assure herself of her self-command, she replied,—“I think still, Algernon, it will be better not to press the subject upon him. He cannot say that you have deceived him, when you have sought to tell him all, and he himself has declined to hear; and I know that such tidings, and the doubts they would inspire of my fate and happiness, would agitate and disturb him terribly.”

“There is another course, dear Agnes,” answered her lover, “and that I will take. I will write the whole facts down, and give the paper to him. He can read it or not, if he likes; but I must not fail on any point where you, dear girl, are concerned. I will go and do it directly, and take the very first moment of putting the statement in his hands.”

As soon as he was gone, Agnes gave way to tears; but they lasted not long, and her mind became more calm afterwards. On his part Algernon Grey hastened back to his own chamber and wrote, as he had proposed, stating the facts simply and straightforwardly, and pointing out that the decision of the judges being unanimous and upon record, though not pub-

lished, the marriage must, sooner or later, be declared null. He then folded up the paper, sealed it, and hurried forth towards the out-works in search of Herbert. He met him ere he had gone a hundred yards, and the good old soldier grasped him frankly by the hand, saying, with a gay air, "I ran away from you this morning, my good friend. Agnes told me you wished to talk with me; but I knew the subject was love; and I will have nought upon my mind, during this siege, but fighting. I trust fully to her and to you, my noble friend; and, as you cannot be married till all this business is over, we can talk of it hereafter, if we both survive. If I die, you must supply my place to her under another name—is it not so?"

"I will," answered Algernon, pressing his hand in his; and Herbert continued with a graver air, "If you fall, Agnes's heart—and I know it well—will be a widowed one, and remain so to her grave. This is all that is needful to say for the present."

"Nay," answered Algernon Grey, "though I would not press the subject upon you, as you dislike it, yet I must not leave you without information on any point when you choose to seek it. I have written down some facts which,

I believe, you ought to know, in this packet. Take it and read it when you are disposed and have leisure. I would never have you suppose, my gallant friend, that I do not deal frankly with you in all things."

"I never will," answered Herbert, taking the letter and gazing at it with a smile,—“I will put this safely by, where it will rest undisturbed for a month to come, if this Bavarian do not press his operations more speedily than he is doing at present. No fresh attack has been made; we have finished the redoubt and planted some guns there; but there are defects in the whole position both of castle and town, which I only hope he is not wise enough to understand. Hark! there is a trumpet blowing at the gate—a summons, I suppose; let us go and see."

It was not exactly as he supposed; for Tilly's envoy, on being admitted to the presence of Merven and Herbert, did not formally demand the surrender of the place. The import of the message was, that the Bavarian general desired to confer with the governor of Heidelberg at any place which he would appoint; a truce being agreed upon for the time. A resolute answer was returned, to the effect that such a proposal was inadmissible, and

that any farther communication that might be required, must take place with Sir Horace Vere, general-in-chief of the Palatine forces.

Scarcely had the trumpeter and the two commissioners, by whom he was accompanied, retired, when a sharp cannonade was heard from the north-east; and when Herbert and his companion hastened to the pheasant garden, they found that the newly constructed redoubt was in possession of the enemy, and that the force by which the attacking party was supported left not the most remote chance of recovering the position lost. Such was the first event of importance in the siege of Heidelberg.

CHAPTER XII.

THE cannon thundered from the Geisberg ; and thick and fast the cannon-balls fell into the town and castle ; but the distance was great, the science of projectiles little known ; and for several days the damage done was of no great importance. Nearer and nearer, however, the Bavarian general pushed his approaches ; and almost hourly news reached the city of fresh reinforcements having arrived in the enemy's camp, of some other point being assailed, or some other gate blockaded. No advantage, however, was gained against the place without a fierce and resolute contest. No sooner was a trench dug, than the foe were driven from it ; no sooner was a fresh battery constructed, than a fierce and vigorous assault was made to wrest

it from the hands of the enemies. Still, however, they advanced slowly but steadfastly. If they were driven back defeated one day, they gained somewhat more than they had lost the next; and with fresh troops continually pouring upon the spot assailed, they carried on the strife unceasingly; while the garrison of Heidelberg were too few in number to oppose anything like an effectual resistance; and retired every night utterly exhausted by the labours of the day.

Wherever the struggle was the most severe, there were Colonel Herbert and Algernon Grey; wherever the fire was the hottest, and the danger most imminent, there they were found in the midst. The confidence of the soldiery was unbounded in those two commanders, especially in the former, who, leading, encouraging, directing, inspired them by his example, and guided them by his experience; and although they saw that the Bavarian army daily made some progress, yet they easily perceived that, if the resistance was carried on with such vigour, months must pass before the town could be reduced; and the never silent voice of hope assured them, that ere then succour would arrive.

On the nineteenth of August, under a tremendous fire of all kinds of missiles, an assault was made on the Trutzkaiser, one of the principal defences of the town; and for nearly an hour and a half one storming party after another poured on relieving each other; but each was met and driven back with a degree of vigour and determination which the Bavarian general had not been led to expect from the terror and consternation which he knew his first approach had spread through the town. The citizens aided the soldiers; the soldiers encouraged the citizens; and not only were the assailants repulsed, but followed far beyond the defences, and many of them slaughtered between the walls and the main body of the Bavarian army.

Habit is a marvellous thing, familiarizing us with all that is most dreadful and abhorrent to our nature. At first the fall of each cannon-ball in the streets of the town, the destruction of a chimney, the carrying away of a buttress, spread a thrill of terror through the whole place. The inhabitants covered over the narrow streets with large sheets of linen to hide themselves from the eyes which they imagined were directing the messengers of death towards every one who was seen walking in the town. The

fall of the place was looked upon as inevitable ; and many of the burghers cursed in their hearts the garrison, whose resistance exposed them to a siege. There were others, however, and indeed the major part of those who had remained in the town, whose loyalty and devotion were of a firmer quality ; and the spirit which animated them, spread to almost all the rest, as soon as habit had rendered the ears of the townspeople familiar with the roar of the artillery. The death of a citizen by a shot from above, then began to be spoken of as an unfortunate accident ; and the man, who some days before would have run half a mile at the report of a cannon, only jumped a little on one side to avoid the falling stone-work, when a ball struck one of the buildings of the city close to him.

One person in the beleaguered place, however, could not be reconciled to the dangers of that siege. Personal fears she had none ; she went out into the town ; she visited the wounded and the sick in the hospitals ; she passed along the most exposed streets and the paths under immediate fire of the enemy ; she comforted the timid ; she encouraged the weak and strong-hearted ; she spoke of resistance.

death, and loyalty that knew no termination but the grave. Wherever she came, her presence, to the hardy man or the frightened woman, was as that of a strengthening angel; and men turned to ask, "Who would have thought that fair Mistress Agnes Herbert, so gay, so gentle, and so tender, would ever have shown such courage and resolution?"

But in the solitude of her own chamber the heart of Agnes sank at the thunder of the cannonade, when she thought of those so dear to her exposed to hourly peril; and when a group of men were seen bearing a wounded or dying comrade from the quarter where her father or her lover were engaged, a feeling of sickening apprehension would come over her; and often with faint steps she would hurry forth to see the face of the dying man. Then she would reproach herself for weakness, resolving, for the future, not to anticipate the evil day; and would prepare to cheer with bright smiles the return of weary friends, when the combat and the watch were over.

They needed all that could be done, indeed, to keep up their spirits in the contest that was on; for day by day, and hour by hour, withstanding every effort of the garrison,

notwithstanding an amount of courage on the part of the citizens which no one had anticipated, the enemy gained ground. To Herbert it was a bitter disappointment as well as grief; for, calculating with the experience of long years of war, he felt sure, that when Tilly commenced the siege, the forces of the Bavarian general were inadequate to the task he had undertaken, and that Heidelberg could hold out for months, if it were defended as he was resolved it should be. But two or three days after the siege commenced, fresh bodies of troops appeared in quarters where they had not been expected; a greater number of pieces of heavy ordnance than had been in the imperial camp on the fourteenth of August, opened their fire on the town and castle on the nineteenth; and the report became rife, that the general of the besieging army had been reinforced by ten thousand men from the forces of the Archduke. The English officer became moody and desponding; and, though in the hour of danger and of combat he was full of fire and energy, filling the soldiers by his very look with courage and determination like his own, yet, when he returned to his lodging in the castle, he would fall into long fits of silence, gaze upon the

ground with a gloomy eye, or pore over a plan of the defences, and sadly shake his head.

The operations of the siege were at first confined to the left bank of the Neckar; and the communication between the town and country on the right bank by the road over the covered bridge, was unimpeded, except by occasional parties of cavalry, who would pillage the peasantry, bringing in provisions, unless protected by a strong guard. The supply of the city, however, was facilitated by the exertions of the Baron of Oberntraut and his small force; and his very name had become so terrible to the imperial troops, that the enemy's cavalry would withdraw in haste at the very first news of his approach. Often, indeed, he came upon them unaware like a quick thunderstorm; and almost daily news arrived in the place of this regiment of Croats, or that body of Cossacks, having been defeated by Oberntraut, and driven over the river in terror and confusion. He himself, however, never appeared within the walls till one evening in the month of September. From the batteries above the Pheasant-garden a tremendous fire was kept up during the greater part of that whole day upon the defences of the castle and the town. The ele-

ments, too, seemed to fight on behalf of the enemy. One of the most awful tempests that a land, prolific in storms, had ever witnessed, swept the valley of the Neckar. Lightning and hail filled the air. The thunder almost drowned the cannonade; and about four o'clock, the wind, which had been rising for some time, increased to a hurricane. Chimneys were blown down; houses were unroofed; men and women were killed in the streets by the falling masonry; and in the midst of the terror and confusion which this awful phenomenon created, the Bavarian commander ordered a general assault to be made on the defences of the town and the castle. Merven, about two-thirds of the garrison, and a large body of the armed citizens presented themselves to defend the place, from what was then called the Spire's gate, to a spot where the walls of the town joined those of the castle. Herbert, with Algernon Grey, the Dutch troops, and the English volunteers, together with two hundred Palatinate infantry, undertook to repel the enemy in their attempt to storm the castle.

The cannonade on both sides was tremendous, as the imperial troops marched steadily to the assault; and from the top of the

round tower at the angle of the great casemate, Colonel Herbert watched their approach, anxiously calculating to what point their efforts would be directed; while several inferior officers stood beside him, to carry his orders to Algernon Grey and others who were in command of the troops in the outworks. Suddenly, as he stood and watched, he perceived the fire of several of the largest of the enemy's guns turned in the direction of the lower part of the town, and, as it seemed to him, upon the bridge; but from the spot where he stood, he could not discover what was taking place in that part of the city. After a moment's consideration, he pointed with his hand towards the outworks which crossed the Pheasant-garden, and to the small battery on the mount at the angle, which commanded the trench towards the Ape's Nest fort, lost in the early part of the siege.

"There will be the principal attack," he said, speaking to the officers near him. "Speed away, Wormser, to the troops near the bath-house, and order them to detach fifty men to reinforce the battery. I must away to see what is going on down there; but I will join them in the Pheasant-garden in a few minutes."

“ You will see best from the block-house, sir, by the Carmelite-wood, where the English volunteers are posted,” said one of the officers who had marked the fire directed upon the lower part of the town ; “ I dare say the Earl can tell you what is going on.”

Herbert made no reply, but hurried away as fast as he could go, seeing two more guns brought to bear upon the town, towards the river. Hurrying through the great casemate, and thence across the gardens, the balls fell thick about him from the lesser guns of the Bavarian batteries. Every moment some of the fine rare trees, collected from all parts of the world, at an enormous expense, crashed under the shot, or fell, torn asunder, strewing the ground with fruits and flowers, such as Europe seldom saw. The vice and the folly of unnecessary war is never, perhaps, more strongly felt than when its destructive effects are seen amongst all the fair and beautiful objects which the peaceful arts have gathered or produced. But the thoughts and feelings of Herbert at that moment were those of the warrior alone : the thoughtful and contemplative man, which he had appeared in calmer days, was cast away, and the lion was roused within him. The trees,

in whose shade and in whose appearance he had delighted, he now cursed, for covering in some degree the approach of the enemy, and he would willingly have ordered them all to be swept away.

Turning the angle of the Pheasant-garden, he soon reached the block-house, where Algernon Grey, with his band of Englishmen, supported by a company of Dutch infantry, had been stationed, as soon as the preparations for an assault had been perceived; and as he reached the foot of the mound, the young Earl came down to meet him, asking, "Have you seen my messenger?"

"No," answered Herbert, quickly. "What news from below there?—they seem firing upon the bridge."

"The wind has carried off the roof," said Algernon Grey, "and there is a great firing near the gate tower on the other side. One cannot well see what is taking place for the smoke and the tower; but fresh troops seem coming up from Neunheim and the plains."

Herbert set his teeth hard, but made no reply; and, mounting to the block-house, he gazed out, holding fast by an iron stanchion;

for, on that high ground, it was scarcely possible to stand against the force of the hurricane. After a moment's consideration, he turned to his young countryman, saying in a low voice, "There is no one there we can trust. The fellow there is a coward, given that post because we thought it quite secure from attack. You will not be wanted here, Algeron. Take twenty men with you, and run down with all speed. Assume the command at once; if he resists, blow his brains out; and at all events maintain the gate. If we lose the bridge, they will not be long out of the town."

Without a word the young nobleman obeyed, hurried down by the shortest paths and passed through the deserted streets of the town, where no human being was to be seen but a wounded soldier crawling slowly back from the walls, and an officer, still more badly hurt, carried in the arms of three or four hospital men. He soon reached the Heidelberg side of the bridge, where he found the gates open, and the archway under the hither tower crowded with soldiery. From the other side of the Neckar, upon the bridge and the farther tower, was directed a terrible fire from a considerable body of Bava-

rian infantry with two small pieces of cannon and from time to time the balls from the battery on the Geisberg passed over the bridge and dropped into the stream, without doing much damage, except to one of the nearer piers and the houses in the lower town; for it would seem that the Bavarian officers above were somewhat embarrassed by the position of their own men on the right bank of the river.

“Clear the way,” cried Algernon Grey, “and, in Heaven’s name, establish some order! There, Lanzprisade, array your men behind the gates, and keep ready to close and defend them, in case of need. Where is your commander?”

“God knows,” answered the man, with a laugh; “we have not seen him for this hour. And Wasserstein and the rest over there are fighting as well as they can without orders.”

“Well, I will command them,” answered Algernon Grey; and, advancing at the head of his men, he crossed the bridge towards the opposite gate. Just in the middle of the passage, a bullet through one of the windows of the bridge struck his corslet and glanced off, wounding a man behind; but the young earl hurried on; and, forcing his way through the men crowded round the gate, mounted by the

stone stairs to the top of the tower, which was crowded by gallant fellows returning the fire of the enemy from every window and loop-hole. One man in particular, a burly-looking German, holding the rank, which we should now term sergeant, stood with his whole person exposed at the largest aperture, whilst two young lads behind him loaded and re-loaded a store of arquebuses, with which he busied himself in picking off the principal assailants, perfectly heedless of the shot, which sometimes passed through the window close to him, sometimes struck upon the stone-work, or lodged in the wood and tiles of the conical roof just above.

“You are Wasserstein,” said Algernon Grey, laying his hand upon his shoulder. “I know you by your gallantry—let me look out, for a moment, I want to see what is going on.”

“One shot more, sir, at that man with the green plume,” replied the man, who instantly recognised him. “We must make the best fight we can; but I think they are bringing up fresh guns; at least, I see horses there coming at a great pace.”

Even while he was speaking he had been taking a quiet and deliberate aim; and the

next instant the gun went off, and a Bavarian officer fell.

"There, that will do," said Wasserstein.
"Now, sir,—but don't be long."

Algernon Grey advanced to the window and gazed out. The next instant a shot grazed his face, shattered a part of his steel cap, and passed off; but he did not move an inch, and he could hear the man behind him murmur, "Ah! that's something like."

"Good news, my friend," said Algernon Grey: "that is Oberntraut coming up in their rear. I know his cornet. I must go out to meet him. You had better come down and command at the drawbridge when it is let down for me to pass."

"I would rather go with you," said the man.

"There is none here whom I can trust but you," said Algernon Grey, laying his hand upon his arm. "You must stay to support me, in case of need."

"Well, I will, then," answered Wasserstein.
"Fire away, my men, fire away! Don't give them a moment's rest: the young Englishman is going out to cut their throats."

Descending to the gates, Algernon Grey

addressed a few words to his men, arrayed them with as broad a front as the space would permit, and, after a moment or two spent in preparation, that the enemy might be taken by surprise, the gates were thrown open, and the drawbridge lowered, in an instant. With shortened pikes, and shoulder touching shoulder, the English band rushed across, with their young leader at their head, while every loop-hole of the tower poured forth shot upon the enemy. A number of Bavarian soldiers, with long planks to form a sort of temporary bridge, were right in the way ; but seeing what seemed to be a considerable body of the garrison rush forth to the charge, they dropped the timber and ran back upon the ranks, which were covering their approach, and threw the first line into confusion. The narrow road did not admit of a wide front to either party ; and, assailed impetuously by the English pikemen, the front line of the Bavarians gave way, driving the second back upon those behind. A number fell ; one or two on the left jumped down the bank into the Neckar ; and confusion and disarray had spread panic amongst a body of several hundred men, before a mere handful of assailants, when the sharp galloping of horse

was heard from beyond the turn of the road; and shots, and cries, and words of command sounded from the rear. A young officer of the Bavarian infantry made a gallant effort to rally his flying soldiers, but it was in vain; and, waving his sword in the air, Algernon Grey exclaimed, "On! on! gallant hearts. Oberntraut is upon their rear. Push on for that gun. We must have one trophy at least."

The men answered with a cheer, and the next moment the cannon was in their hands. Up the slopes, amongst the rocks and orchards, down by the stream, up to their middles in water, the Bavarian troops fled without order; and the moment after, the young Earl could see the Palatinate horsemen dashing in amongst them, pursuing wherever the ground permitted it, and cutting them down without mercy. It was a wild, strange, horrible scene; and in the midst of it was seen Oberntraut himself, without any of the defensive armour of the period, but habited merely with hat and plume, buff coat of untanned leather, and thick gloves and riding-boots.

"Oberntraut! Oberntraut!" cried Algernon Grey, as he came near; but Oberntraut took no notice, dealing a blow here and there with

his sword at the heads of the routed Bavarians, and riding on towards the bridge. Yet it was clear that he must have recognised the English party; for they had a Bohemian flag with them, they wore the Palatinate scarfs, and no blow was struck at any of them, although the road was so narrow that the young Earl was obliged to halt his men, and give them a different formation round the captured gun, in order to let the cavalry pass.

“He is heated, and impatient with the fight,” thought Algernon Grey; and, without farther comment, he commanded his men to bring the gun, and the stores of ammunition which were with it, into the town, and returned towards the bridge, knowing that there was scarcely a part of the defences where the presence of every man, who could be spared from other points, was not necessary. The drawbridge was by this time down again, and the gates open; and, leaving the cannon in the hands of Wasserstein, the young Englishman hurried up with his men towards the blockhouse, where he had been first posted, remarking a tremendous fire from the right of the pheasant-garden, and a dense smoke rising up from under a cavalier of late construction, still farther to the right. As he

approached, the comparative quietness of everything towards the blockhouse, and in the park of the Friesenberg, showed him that the attack had been made in the quarter of the cavalier; and, turning to the right, through the narrow winding paths and half-completed terraces of Solomon de Caus, he soon found himself at the entrance of the pheasant-garden, and had a view of the outwork which had been one of the principal points assailed. The fire seemed somewhat to have slackened; but the Palatinate troops were still ranged within the parapet, and a group of officers were seen standing near the centre of the platform, amongst whom Algernon Grey could remark the figure of Herbert, and, somewhat to his surprise, that of Oberntraut also. Herbert's face was turned away from the Bavarian batteries, and his attitude at once made the young Englishman say to himself, "The enemy have been repulsed." The next moment, he saw Oberntraut shake Colonel Herbert warmly by the hand, and descend the steps leading to the path immediately in front. The young Baron came on with a heavy brow, and eyes bent down, as if in deep thought, scarcely seeming to perceive the approaching party with the Earl at its head. Algernon

stopped him, however, and took his hand, saying, "What is the matter, my friend?"

Oberntraut gazed in his face gravely, then suddenly returned his grasp, replying, "There is a great deal I do not understand; but I am sure you're honest—I am sure you are; and I have said so."

Without waiting for any answer, Oberntraut turned away and walked down the hill; and, murmuring to himself, "This is very strange," the young earl advanced and mounted the steps to the top of the cavalier. There he saw the enemy in full retreat, carrying with them, apparently, a number of killed and wounded. Herbert was now at the farther side of the work; but, though he must have seen the young Englishman approach, he did not turn towards him; and, when Algernon spoke, his reply, though not discourteous, was distant and cold.

"The assault has been repelled, my lord," he said; "and will not be renewed to-night. Nevertheless, it may be as well to be prepared; and, therefore, I will beg you to command here in my absence, while I return for awhile to the castle, whither I am called by business."

Algernon Grey was pained and surprised; but it was not a moment or a scene in which

any explanation could be asked ; and, saying merely, “ Very well, I will do so,” he turned to examine once more the retreating force of the enemy.

Herbert, in the meantime, descended into the pheasant-garden ; and quickening his pace, as soon as he was under cover of the trees, he walked in the most direct line to his own lodging in the tower.

On opening the door he found Agnes watching for his return ; and her face lighted up with joy, as soon as she beheld him ; but a cloud came over it the next instant to see him return alone, which had seldom happened of late.

“ Oh, my dear father,” she cried ; “ I am glad to see you back uninjured. This has been a terrible day,—but where is Algernon ? Is he hurt ?” and here her voice sunk almost to a whisper.

“ No, my child,” answered Herbert, gravely ; “ he is safe and well, and has done his devoir gallantly ;” and, putting her gently aside, he advanced to a small cabinet on the other side of the circular room, unlocked a drawer, and took out a sealed letter, which he instantly broke open and commenced reading. Agnes remarked that his hand trembled, which she had never seen in her life before. When he had done, he

seated himself and leaned his head upon his hand in thought.

"Agnes, my love," he said at length; "this place is no place for you. The dangers are too great, the scenes are too terrible. I must send you to Louisa Juliana till the siege is over."

"Oh, no, no," cried Agnes; "I cannot, I will not leave you."

"Hush!" said Herbert; "you must go; your presence here unnerves me. I will send off a messenger early to-morrow morning to the Electress to know if you can be safe with her. He can be back in two days; and then you must go. Your stay here and all the risks, would drive me mad."

Agnes bent down her head and wept; but Herbert's determination came too late. Before the following evening a large force of Imperial infantry and several pieces of cannon crossed the Neckar by the bridge at Ladenburg, and were brought round to the opposite side of the bridge. The town was thus completely invested; and, although not cut off from all communication with the country without, the obstacles which presented themselves were such as Herbert would not willingly expose his daughter to encounter.

CHAPTER XIII.

ON an evening at the end of summer, while leaves were yet green and skies yet full of sunshine, though the long daylight of the year's prime had diminished somewhat more than an hour, and darkness and winter were stealing slowly forward in the distance, a small but handsome room, richly furnished with everything that the taste of that day could display, with exquisite carvings of old oak, with fine pictures, with velvet hangings, ay, and with green shrubs and flowers both rare and beautiful, showed preparations for a supper party, at which two persons only were expected. The table was arranged with great taste: rich fruits in a silver vase formed a pyramid in the midst, and two or three dishes of the most beautiful

workmanship presented various tempting pieces of confectionery strewed over, in quaint devices and in a regular pattern, with minute flowers. On the right of the principal table, at some little distance, was a carved oak buffet covered with crimson velvet, just seen from beneath the edges of a damask napkin, on which were arranged some large silver tankards of beautiful forms, two golden goblets, and several tall glasses gilded on the stem. The windows of the room were open, but shaded with trees and flowering shrubs, and a green soft light spread through the interior, as the rays of the setting sun poured through the veil of leaves. That light began to assume a purple hue, showing that the orb of day had touched the verge of the horizon, when a lady entered by a door from the gardens, magnificently habited in an evening dress, with somewhat more display of her fair person than the general habits of the English people rendered decorous. We see the same mode of dress in the pictures of Rubens, especially those in which he represents the court of France at that period; but the costume had not yet become general in Great Britain, and, to English minds, the dress might have been higher, the wing-like collar more close.

The lady closed the door and locked it; looked eagerly round, advanced to the other door, and did the same. Then, taking a small vial from that fair bosom, and a plate from the table, she poured out of the little bottle a white powder into the centre of the plate. There was a little vase of silver standing near, filled with powdered sugar, and from it she took a portion with a small silver ladle, then mingled the sugar and the white powder in the plate intimately together, and sprinkled the confectionery thickly with the mixture. This done, she again gazed round, looked out through both the windows, replaced the little vial in her bosom, and, unlocking either door, went forth again.

The room remained vacant for half an hour; twilight succeeded to broad day, and night to twilight, but soft and fair; no heavy darkness, but a gentle transparent shade, with the starlight and the coming moon, felt though not seen within the chamber. The windows remained open; the soft air sighed in through the branches, and a solitary note of the long-singing merle was heard every now and then from beneath the leaves.

Suddenly the quick hoofs of a number of horses sounded on the road near, then stopped,

and voices talking gaily in the house succeeded. Two servants entered that carefully decked room, and lighted the candles in the lustres. A moment after, a man in a white cap and apron followed, looked over the whole table, and moved some of the flowers upon the dishes ; but the cook did not seem to remark that aught had been done to his confectionery.

“ ’Ods life, there are more of them coming,” he cried, addressing the other two servants, as the tramp of horses was again heard, “ I wish they would keep their hungry throats away. Run out, Lloyd, and see who are these new ones.”

The room was left vacant again for a few minutes, and then the door was thrown open by one of the attendants. The lady entered, leaning somewhat languishingly on the arm of a tall, handsome young man, splendidly dressed, but yet without that air of high birth and courtly habits which were eminently conspicuous in his fair companion.

A slight degree of paleness spread over the lady’s face as she passed the threshold, and the deep fringed eyelids dropped over the large black eyes. The gentleman’s look was upon her at the moment, and his brow somewhat

contracted; his countenance assumed an expression of shrewd and bitter meaning. He said nought, however; and the lady, recovering herself in a moment, turned her head, saying to the servant behind, "Let the men wait—tell the boy I will see him, and receive his lord's letter after supper."

"Who are these men?" asked the gentleman, advancing with her towards the table.

"The page of the Earl of Hillingdon, my good lord," she replied, with a sarcastic smile, seating herself in the nearest chair; "his page and a servant, bearing a letter from that noble gentleman to poor deserted me."

"Nay, not much deserted," cried the other, in a gallant tone, "when my heart and so many others are at your feet."

"Hush!" she said sharply, though in a low voice, "nothing of this before the servants."

As she spoke a dish was brought in, and handed first to her guest; but he would be extremely courteous that night, and ordered it to be carried to her. She took some at once, and ate, without noticing his attention, but saying aloud as he helped himself, "I am but a poor housekeeper, my good lord, and am sorry my noble uncle is not here to treat you better; but

I told the cook to do his best, and show his skill."

"Oh, this is excellent!" replied the gentleman, "and will make up for my bad fare yesterday at Hertford, where everything was so bitter methought I was poisoned. The taste is in my mouth still."

"Nay, we must drive it thence with better things," said the lady. "I would not deny myself the pleasure of receiving you, when you wrote to say you would come, though my uncle was absent; and I must try to make up for your disappointment in not finding him, by giving you good cheer—will you not take wine?"

"Let us drink from the same cup," said the gentleman, with a soft and passionate look, notwithstanding her warning, "the wine will only taste sweet to me, if your lips sip it too."

The lady's eye flashed suddenly, and her brow grew dark; but she answered, tossing her proud head, "I drink after no one, my lord. As to drinking after me, you may do as you please.—Give me some wine."

"Oh, your cup will render the wine nectar to me," said the guest, while the attendant to whom she had spoken poured out some wine for her

into one of the golden goblets. She took a small portion, and then told the man to give it to her visitor, saying, with a laugh not quite natural, "What foolish things men are!"

The supper proceeded; dish after dish was brought in, but the gentleman would taste nothing of which the lady had not partaken before, till his conduct became somewhat remarkable. Her brow grew dark as night for an instant, but cleared again; and all that remained was a bright red spot upon her cheek.

There was a slight rustling sound near the open window, as the supper drew towards its conclusion, and the lady remarked, "The wind methinks is rising." Twice or thrice she looked in the direction of the window, and a sort of anxious uncertain expression came into her face. She pressed her guest to drink more wine, and he did so, always using the same cup and keeping it by him; but the wine at length seemed to have its effect. His face flushed, his eyes sparkled, his language became warm and passionate, somewhat coarse withal, and mingled with a bitterness, especially on the subject of woman's heart and mind, which was little less than insulting in a lady's presence.

Her eye fixed upon him firmly, shining clear

and bright like a diamond, from under the slightly contracted brow. The red spot vanished from her cheek, and she remained deadly pale. "Why gaze you at me so sternly, lovely Kate?" asked her guest.

"Because I think you do not yet know women rightly," answered the lady at once: "you will learn better one day.—You need wait no longer," she continued, turning to the attendants; "we will be our own servants.—Now, my good lord, to end your supper, taste one of these tarts of Flemish cream. I marked well, when last you were here, that you loved them, and I had them prepared expressly for you."

One of the servants, ere he went, carried the silver dish to his lady's guest; but the gentleman kept to his rule. "Will you divide one with me, bright Kate?" he asked.

"Nay," she answered, glancing her eyes for an instant to the window, "I am not fond of them."

"Then I will not take them either," said her visitor. "What you love I will love—what you take I will take."

The lady set her teeth hard; then, as the servant set down the dish and withdrew, she suddenly stretched out her hand to another plate

saying in a low but firm voice, and with a bland smile, "Well I will divide one of these lady-grace's, as they call them, with you."

"That is kind, lovely Kate," cried the visitor, drawing his chair nearer to her; "and of all lady's grace on earth, let me have yours."

The lady smiled again quite sweetly, parted the sort of cheese-cake equally, and gave him half. He paused an instant, and she began. Then he ate, saying, "This is excellent."

"It is not bad," she answered, continuing to eat the cake, and keeping her eyes fixed upon him.

"Now that I have my lady's grace,"—he continued, drawing nearer still, and endeavouring to put his arm round her. But, instantly, she started up with a look of scorn; and, at the same moment, William Ifford sprang in at the open window.

"What is this, my lord!" he cried, "insulting my sweet cousin? Upstart and villain as you are, were there a drop of really noble blood in your veins—"

"It is vain, William! it is vain!" said the lady, in a low tone. "You have come too late. I have eaten too.—My right noble lord, you look very pale. I told you that you knew not

women rightly. You know them now—as much as e'er you will know.—Heaven! how faint I feel!—But his eyes roll in his head.—Stop him from the door, William.—You are sick, my lord!—Will you try some Flemish cream, or taste more of your lady's grace?—Methinks you have had enough for once.”

“I was warned! I was warned!” murmured the unhappy man, holding by the table for support.

“Ay; but not warned that the hate of a heart like mine will sacrifice life itself for vengeance,” answered the lady, sinking down into a seat.

“I will have vengeance, too,” said the guest, starting up, and staggering with a furious effort towards the door. But William Ifford caught him by the breast, and threw him back. He staggered—fell—rolled for a moment or two in frightful convulsions, and then, with a scream like that of a sea-bird in a storm, gave up the ghost.

William Ifford was at that moment by the lady's side. “Catherine! Catherine!” he cried, “have you taken much?”

She made no answer; some quick sharp shudders passed over her frame, and a sort of choking sobbing convulsed her throat. A

minute after, her head fell back upon the chair, and then, with a low but sharp sound, sunk down to the ground.

Her guilty kinsman gazed from the one corpse to the other with a wild and hesitating look. But then he thought he heard a noise. It was the sound of steps and voices coming near; and, leaping through the window, he disappeared. He could not have been gone fifty yards when the door of the room was burst open in haste, and the attendants of the house flocked in, with the page Frill and the old servant Tony in the midst.

“Poisoned, boy!—poisoned!” cried the man named Lloyd. “Heaven and earth! it is too true!”

All paused in an instant, as the sight which that terrible chamber presented lay before their eyes; and, for some moments, not a word was said, while one gazed over the shoulders of another at the two corpses. Then all burst forth at once, surrounding the Earl of Hillingdon’s page, and questioning him closely with eager and vociferous tongues. But Frill was more guarded in his answers than might have been expected. He told them that, liking all fine sights, he had amused himself by watching

the Lady Catherine and her guest at supper, through the window on the right, between which and the other window stood a thick tree. He then detailed minutely all that had occurred till the entrance of Sir William Ifford ; declared that he had heard steps approaching over the grassy lawn, and then had seen some one suddenly appear in the room, who, he supposed, had entered by the other window. He stoutly denied having seen the intruder's face ; but at the same time remarked that the poisoning could not be his doing, for that nothing more was eaten till, in the midst of high words, which first gave him a clue to the terrible truth, the one victim had fallen and then the other, and he had run away to bring assistance.

Had the poison been of such a quality that any antidote would have proved effectual, so much time was lost that none could be administered. Not a spark of vitality remained when the bodies were at length examined ; and the only indication of how the fatal event had occurred which could be discovered, was a small vial in the lady's bosom, containing a very minute portion of a white powder, which, being tried upon a dog, produced almost instant death.

The wonder lasted its nine days and was then forgotten by the world at large; but the sudden disappearance of Sir William Ifford, the gay, the witty, the dissolute, continued for a few weeks longer to excite inquiry and remark. No one ever learned the conclusion of his history: some said he had entered a monastery of Barefooted Friars, and died there in the odour of sanctity; others, with greater probability on their side, declared that he had turned Turk, and was to the day of his death one of the most relentless persecutors of the Christians. We only know that, on the night when this double death took place, a horseman rode away at a terrible pace from the small village in the neighbourhood, took his way as fast as possible towards the sea-side, and thence left no traces of his course behind.

For three days the page and the old servant of the Earl of Hillingdon were detained in Huntingdonshire, to give evidence regarding the sudden death of two persons of such high rank; but coroners were as wise, and coroners' juries as enlightened, in those days as in our own, and a burlesque verdict was returned in a very tragic case. The stout old servant and his youthful companion then set out to join their

lord, arrived in Germany in safety, and, thanks to many of those circumstances which might have seemed best calculated to impede them, such as their ignorance—or rather small knowledge—of the language, and their very narrow information upon geographical subjects, arrived within a few miles' distance of Heidelberg with fewer difficulties than better instructed persons would probably have encountered. The answers which they gave, in what they called German, to the questions of those who interrogated them, completely puzzled their examiners; and the round they took to arrive at the city, brought them to a point the most opposite from that at which a messenger from England might have been expected to appear. It was late at night when they reached the small village of Siegelhausen; but there they heard from the peasants a confirmation of the rumours which had previously reached them, that Heidelberg was completely invested, and, to use the expression of the boors, "that a field mouse could not creep in."

"I will try, at all events;" said Frill, "for I know my lord would give his right hand for the news we bring. If it cost me my ears, I will try;" and with this magnanimous resolution he lay down to sleep.

CHAPTER XIV.

It was in the early grey of the morning : all was silent and solemn ; the beleaguered city lay in its brief repose ; the cannon on the hills and at the gates were still ; the camp of the assailants slumbered, except where the tired sentinel paced up and down, longing for relief, or where the wounded lay on the feverish beds of the crowded hospitals. Quietly and silently on foot, with their horses left behind at the village, and in the dress of the Palatinate peasantry, the servant and the page plodded on as if going from Siegelhausen to Neunheim. Ere they had gone far, they saw the tents which now thickly covered the slopes towards the Heiligberg, the huts of the Croats, and the breastworks which had been thrown up ; while

six pieces of artillery appeared stretched out upon a battery some three hundred yards up the hill. Still they walked on, however, plodding along, and affecting the heavy step and swinging air of the boor.

They were within a hundred paces of the bridge, when suddenly, from the neighbouring field, they heard the call to stand; and the next instant several Austrian soldiers, in their white uniforms, sprang down into the road. One seized Tony by the arm, and the others were running up, when the page gave a look to the Neckar, and jumped down the bank. The water, fortunately, was low, and the boy's heart stout.

"In, Frill! in!" cried Tony; and, without more ado, the youth dashed into the stream.

Two shots were instantly fired at him, but in haste and ill aimed. He was seen, too, from the bridge; and several arquebuses were discharged amongst the Austrians with very little reverence for poor Tony, who had nearly suffered severely, held as he was in the midst of the enemy.

Protected by the fire from the bridge, the boy hurried on for some way, up to his middle in water. Then climbing on some

rocks, he at length plunged boldly in ~~weher~~ the tide was deep and strong. He was a good swimmer; but the force of the stream was great, and the water deadly cold. He was borne down, notwithstanding every effort, carried through one of the arches of the bridge, and though he struck for the shore as long as he could, yet nothing but the town wall presented itself dipping in the river. His strength began to fail, when a little sally-port and landing-place at length came in sight; but the poor lad's heart sunk, for it was distant, and he felt no power within him to reach it. The last thing he saw was a man running quickly along on the top of the wall; then all became dim and green, with a rushing sound in the ears, bewildered thoughts, and, at length, dull forgetfulness.

When the page opened his eyes again, he was in a small room and laid undressed upon a bed, with an old man of a mild and venerable aspect gazing at him. His whole frame tingled; his breathing was heavy and difficult: it seemed as if there was a world upon his chest; and, for several minutes, he recollected nought of what had happened. There were sounds in the air, however, which soon recalled him to a

sense of where he was. Every minute or two a loud explosion shook the house and made the casements clatter as if the whole building were coming down; and, raising himself upon his arm, he tried to speak; but the old man gave him a sign to be silent, and, going to a table near, brought him a small quantity of wine.

It was long ere the stranger would permit him to converse, and longer ere he would allow him to rise, although the page explained that he had come to bring some intelligence of importance to his lord the Earl of Hillingdon.

"Your lord is quite safe and well," replied old Dr. Alting, (to whose house the youth had been taken,) in answer to his anxious inquiries, "and you can go to him by-and-by. At present you are not fit. There will be no assault to-day, for there was one yesterday; so you will have time enough."

But Frill was impatient, and about three o'clock he was permitted to go forth, with directions as to where he was likely to find his master. The poor boy, however, had somewhat miscalculated his strength; for he found to climb the hill a weary task; and when he had obtained admission into the castle, he was sent from place to place in search of Algernon, till

at length he sat down at the foot of the second casemate, and wept from very weariness.

While there, a young officer passed with his hand bound up, and paused to enquire what ailed him. The matter was soon explained, and the lad was once more directed onward, but with better assurance.

“The Earl is at the blockhouse which you see just peeping up yonder,” said the officer; “I left him there five minutes ago; but go by those lower paths, for the fire is somewhat hot, and you may chance to get hurt as I have done, or worse.”

The page rose again and walked on, passed through the park of the Friesenberg, and approached the edge of the Carmelite wood. The cannonade as he went became every moment fiercer, and the balls whistled more than once over his head, while the roar of the artillery was mingled at intervals with the rattling fire of small arms. Not only in front and to the right was heard the sullen sound of the heavy ordnance; but, rolling round and round, the deep voice of the cannon from the walls, and then, farther off again, from the Imperial batteries, was heard like thunder in a forest; and still the mountains and rocks sur-

rounding the narrow valley of the Neckar echoed and re-echoed the terrific noise. He was a brave lad, but his nerves were shaken, and he looked round from time to time to right and to left expecting to see the enemy forcing their way in.

At length, however, he reached the foot of the little hill on which the blockhouse stood, and, gazing up, saw two or three men whose faces he knew well, standing above, before a small palisade. "Is my lord here, Halford?" he cried. "Is my lord here?"

"Yes, yes!" cried the man. "Come up, Frill;" and the page with a lightened heart ran up the steps of the mount. Before he reached the top Algernon Grey came forth himself, saying to the man to whom Frill had spoken, "Go round to Colonel Herbert, Halford, as fast as possible. Say there is not even demonstration here—that I have too many men, and we are doing nothing.—Ah Frill! is that you? Welcome back, my good boy. How in Heaven's name got you in? Where is Tony?"

"In the hands of the enemy," replied the boy. "I swam the Neckar, and was nearly drowned, but he was caught."

"What news from England?" asked Alger-

non Grey eagerly. "Did the Lady Catherine give you or Tony a letter for me?"

"None, my noble lord," answered the page. "She intended, I believe, but was prevented."

"That is most unfortunate!" cried his lord bitterly. "All is going wrong here, and one word might have been of vast importance—"

"I have something to tell, sir," said Frill, in a low tone, "if you would move down a little, for it is not fitted for all ears."

Algernon took a few steps down the hill, saying, "Speak, speak!" and the boy went on, in a voice raised little above a whisper, to detail all that had occurred since he had left his lord. When he came to the catastrophe, Algernon Grey turned deadly pale, shocked and horrified beyond expression. For several minutes he did not utter a word, but gazed upon the ground in sad and bitter silence. He was free—the heavy bond which had weighed upon him for so many years was broken—his liberty was restored; but how dark and terrible were the means! and with these his mind busied itself in gloomy thoughts ere it could rest on aught else.

"Who was the man?" he asked at length,—"the person you say came in by the window?"

"I did not see his face, my lord," replied the

boy; "but I heard the voice of Sir William Ifford!"

"My lord, my lord!" cried the soldier Halford, coming back as fast as he could run. "Colonel Herbert desires you to advance to the pheasant-garden without a moment's delay, leaving nothing but a guard here."

Algernon Grey hurried up, called out the English and Dutch troops from the blockhouse and a small detached trench in front, arrayed them on the slope, and, telling the page to remain with the guard he left behind, ordered the men to advance at the charge by the winding path through the wood. The roll of musketry was now heard sharp and near, mingled with drums beating; and, falling back to the side of the man Halford, the young Earl demanded what he had seen and heard.

"There were full two thousand men, sir, advancing to storm the works in the pheasant-garden," he replied. "I counted ten Austrian ensigns myself; and there were a number of Bavarian troops behind."

"Were they near?" asked Algernon Grey.

"Half-way between the Crane's Nest and the Cavalier," replied the soldier.

The young Earl ran on again to place himself at the head, murmuring, "No time is to be lost, indeed."

The way was heavy and circuitous, interrupted by frequent flights of steps, which greatly delayed the men; but there was no cutting across; for the trees and the rocks of the Friesenberg in that part which had not yet been levelled, interrupted the straight course which might otherwise have been taken; and the firing was heard nearer and nearer, till even the sound of the guns did not drown the cries and shouts with which it was mingled; whilst still the beating drum and the blast of the trumpet was heard urging the men on either side to deadly strife. The young Earl's heart beat vehemently to get forward, but a full quarter of an hour elapsed ere he came in sight of the point of attack, approaching the works assailed by the rear of a fortified terrace which led to the Cavalier. This terrace, originally designed for ornament, was, perhaps, the weakest point in the whole defences of the castle; and, though commanded by the guns of the Cavalier above, it formed a sort of step, as it were, to the attack of the stronger work. The parapets, too, had been terribly shattered by the enemy's fire; and, when the young

Englishman first caught sight of it, a terrible and an alarming scene presented itself to his eyes. An Austrian flag was already upon the terrace; the fight was going on hand to hand in several places; and, at the farther angle, driven almost under the guns of the Cavalier, he caught sight of Colonel Herbert, with a Bohemian flag in his hand, rallying his men to charge the enemy in the hope of clearing the platform.

No consideration was necessary; the only course to be pursued was plain and straightforward; and though at the risk of encountering the fire of friends as well as of enemies, Algernon Grey sprang up the steps to the top of the terrace, arrayed his men with a wide front, and gave the order to charge. There was no hesitation either on the part of the English or the Dutch. All saw that, without a great effort, the fort was lost; and, rushing on in a compact body, they swept the whole length of the terrace, driving the assailants before them at the point of the pike. Attacked in front and rear at the same time, the Imperial troops, who were establishing themselves on the platform, gave way; many threw down their arms; and many either leaped over the

parapet into the midst of their comrades below, or rushed to the tops of the ladders, and cast themselves upon those who were climbing up to support them.

The outwork was regained ; and, waving his hand to Herbert, whom he saw a little in advance, the young Earl was turning his head to give orders for a part of his men to fall back and line the parapet again, when suddenly he beheld Agnes' father stagger, drop the flag, and fall forward on the platform.

With a few brief words as to the defence of the work, Algernon Grey sprang forward to Herbert's side. Two of his men had already raised him in their arms ; but his head hung heavily on his shoulder ; and a ghastly wound on the right temple, passing along the whole side of the head and evidently injuring the skull, "bade hope itself despair."

"He is dead, sir, he is dead !" said one of the men who held him in his arms.

"I think not," replied Algernon, watching his countenance sadly ; "the brain may not be injured. Throw a cloak over him and carry him down into the garden ; I will come in a minute, when I have spoken with the captain of the Cavalier—Get him some water."

The men took him up and bore him down

the steps; but the news had spread already amongst the men, and it was evident that they were greatly discouraged. Although rapid means were taken by Algernon Grey and the officer now in command of the outwork for its defence, it is probable that it would have been taken that night, as it was on the following morning, had not the Imperial officers, smarting from severe loss and discouraged by an unexpected repulse at the very moment when they thought themselves victorious, ordered the drums to beat a retreat.

A furious cannonade followed the enemy as they retired; and, seeing that all was safe for the time in that quarter, Algernon Grey left his men under the command of the Dutch officer associated with him, and turned to ascertain the fate of his friend. At the top of the steps, however, his eye ran over the town of Heidelberg; and he beheld with consternation fire and smoke arising in large volumes from three different parts of the town. Springing down, he hurried to a spot where, under some trees, he saw several men grouped together around another lying on the ground; and, as he advanced, one of them, a young German officer, came forward to meet him, say-

ing, "He is living, my lord. He has spoken—he has mentioned your name."

In another instant Algernon was by Herbert's side, and saw, with a gleam of hope, that his eyes were open, and the light of life and intellect still therein. They turned upon him, indeed, with a faint sad look, and the lips moved for a moment ere a sound issued forth. "My child!" he said, at length, "my child!"

"Shall I send for her?" asked Algernon Grey, kneeling by his side, and bending down his ear.

"No, no!" answered the wounded man, quickly; "but her fate, young man—her fate?"

"Fear not, fear not," answered the Earl; "I will defend, protect her with my life—die for her should need be."

"I believe you," said Herbert; "I will trust you!—Oh God! Yet swear to me that you will deal with her honestly; swear by all that you hold most sacred—by your faith in Christ—by your honour as an English gentleman, that you will be to her as a brother."

"I will be more," answered Algernon, in a low, but firm voice, "I will be her husband. I

swear to you, by all I hold most sacred, that, as soon as she herself will consent, she shall be my wife ; till then, my sister."

"Your wife !" said Herbert, sternly ; "have you not another wife, young lord ?"

"No," answered Algernon Grey, pressing his hand ; "that impediment is removed—that bond broken. If you had read the letter which I wrote you, you would have seen that the marriage was but in name. It is now, however, altogether at an end. I have received the tidings this day—within this hour. She whom men called my wife is dead."

"Dead !" cried Herbert, in a stronger voice ; "death is busy just now ;" and then he paused, and raised his hand feebly to his head. But the fingers rested upon the bloody hair, and he drew them back, and pressed Algernon's hand in his. "I trust you," he said at length, "I trust you, Algernon. Oberntraut's news, that you were already married, frightened—shocked me. I found confirmation in your letter, and I have been very sad ever since—but I trust you. Love her—oh, love her, and make her happy, for she deserves it well. An hour more, and the father's arm will be cold and powerless. Be you all to her.—What wants that man?

Ask him whence he comes?—I would fain die in quiet.”

“The town has fallen, sir,” said an officer who had come up in haste. “In two places they have forced a way; and Governor Mervin has retreated to the castle with the garrison. He sent me up to call Colonel Herbert to instant council.”

“Tell him,” said Herbert, raising his head, “that Colonel Herbert is removed from his command by a higher power than any of the earth. Tell him what you have seen, and that I say, God protect him, and bless his arms in a just cause! Now, Algernon, one word more—there are not many left for me to speak: the town is taken—the castle must fall. We have no stores, no means. Good God! let not my child be in this place, if it must fall by storm! Heaven and earth!—it makes this poor shattered brain reel. Swear,—swear you will take her hence. There are the passages below;—she knows them all. There is the way out—there;”—and he pointed with his hand.

“I will, if it be possible,” answered Algernon Grey.

“Possible, possible!” said Herbert, his mind evidently wandering; “oh, yes, it is quite pos-

sible. You hear, he swears that he will take her hence," continued the dying man, with his faint eyes rolling over the bystanders; "he swears—remember—keep him to his oath."

"What, my gallant friend!" said an English voice behind Algernon Grey, "brought to this at last?"

"Ay, Merven, ay, even so," answered Herbert; "we must all come to this.—Bring me some water. I will speak with you, Merven. He swears he will take her hence before they storm the place. Send him forth, for I know him—know him well. He will remain to fight; and then she is without father, husband, friend—Oh, God! have mercy on me! how my brain reels!"

"Let some one fetch a litter," said Merven, kneeling down by his side; "we must bear him home."

"I have sent for one already," said Algernon Grey; "yonder it comes, I think."

"My child; my sweet child!" said Herbert, gazing still in Merven's face; "she can close my eyes, and then away—you will not let him linger?"

"No," answered the Governor, "I will send him forth, upon my word. If my command is

of any power, he shall go. He can be of little service here, I fear."

"Thanks, thanks!" said Herbert, and fell into silence, closing his eyes.

A few minutes after, a litter was brought up from the castle; it was one which the Princess Elizabeth had often used,—and Herbert was placed upon it, and the curtains drawn. Four stout soldiers, taking it upon their shoulders, carried it down, and Algernon Grey followed, conversing sadly with Merven, and informing him of all that had taken place of the assault on their side.

"You have been more fortunate than we have," answered the Governor. "Trutzkaiser was taken early in the day; and the fools, forgetting to shut the gates as our soldiers rushed in, the enemy came pell mell amongst them. I rallied them, barricaded the street by the Spire's door, and kept them at bay till four, when came the news that the bridge was likewise forced; and it became needful at once to retire into the castle, lest I should be taken in front and rear at once. But even here I find," he added in a low voice, "there is but provision and ammunition for four days. Tilly has already sent to offer terms; but I have referred

nim to Vere, in Mannheim ; and most likely we shall have another assault to-morrow.—Hark ! Do you hear those shrieks ? 'Tis from the town. The bloody villains are at their work !” and he looked sternly down upon the ground, setting his teeth hard. Algernon Grey made no reply ; and Merven continued, “ You have promised to go, my friend, and take the sweet girl with you ; but how is it to be done ?”

“ I know not,” answered the young Earl ; “ but my promise was only conditional. If we could send her forth in safety all would be well : I cannot—ought not to quit the place while you remain to defend it.”

“ He knew you, you see,” said Merven ; “ but if there be a means I must send you ; for I have promised unconditionally ; and you must obey me, my young lord—how, is the only question.”


“ Herbert seemed to think Agnes knew of some means,” said Algernon Grey ; “ but yet—”

“ No buts, my lord,” replied Merven. “ If there be a means you must take it, when and how you can. I desire, I command you to do so ; it will be two mouths less in the castle, and that is always something.—Stay, I will ask

him what he meant. Perhaps we could dress her as a page, and send you under a flag of truce to confer with Vere on the terms of capitulation—but no, it would not do. Tilly is such a brute—you would almost be as safe within the walls; and his men are not the most famous for keeping terms, even when solemnly sworn to. I should not wonder if we were all massacred marching out. But I will ask Herbert if he knows any other means;” and, taking a step or two forward to the side of the litter, he drew back the curtain. The moment after, he turned his face sadly towards Algernon Grey, shaking his head, and saying, “He can give no answer now.”

Herbert’s eyes were open, but they were fixed and meaningless. The jaw had dropped; the hand grasped tight the side of the litter, but it was already cold as ice.

“Halt, my men,” said Merven; “’tis useless bearing him any farther. Carry him to the gardener’s house there;” and he pointed up to a small stone building lying between the outer and the inner works, some fifty paces on the left. Then grasping the Earl’s hand, he added, “Hasten down to her and break the tidings; then ask her if she knows any means of flying



from this place ; and, if she does, remember it is my most express command that you guard her safely on the way. They tell me some one got into the town to-day from without ; and if so, there must be a way hence also."

"It was my poor page, who swam the Neckar," answered Algernon, with a sad smile ; "but I will go and bear my heavy story to poor Agnes."

"Do, do," said Merven ; "and I will hasten back into the castle and send a messenger to Tilly, calling on him as a man and a Christian to stop the atrocities going on there below. Those shrieks wring my very heart."

The unfeeling reply to Merven's message is well known ; and every reader of history is aware that for three whole days the town of Heidelberg was given up to a brutal soldiery.

Algernon Grey walked sadly on, and slowly too ; for he shrunk from the terrible task before him. He did wrong, though unintentionally ; for he calculated not how fast rumour travels, knew not that the utmost speed was needful to outstrip the winged messengers of evil tidings. He paused for a moment at the foot of the stairs leading to Agnes's apartments, which were still in what is called the Electress's lodg-

ing. Then, having made up his mind how to act, and laid vain plans for breaking the tidings gently, he ascended with a quick step and opened the door.

Agnes was seated at a table, with her hands pressed over her eyes and her bosom heaving with heavy sobs ; but the moment he entered she raised her head, started up and cast herself upon his bosom, murmuring, " Oh, Algernon, Algernon !"

He saw that all had been told ; and for his sole reply he pressed her to his heart in silence.

" Where have they taken him ?" she asked at length, wiping away the tears, which flowed fast again as soon as dried.

" To the gardener's house," he answered, " to the right of the great casemate."

" I must go thither," she said, " I must go thither. Come with me, dear Algernon ; I have none but you to support me now." And she moved towards the door, dressed as she was at the moment.

" Nay, throw this veil over you, my love," he said, taking up one that lay near and putting it over her head. Then, drawing her arm through his own, he led her down, and,

choosing the least frequented paths, proceeded towards the gardener's house.

The sun was setting in the mellow evening of an early autumn day; the sky was clear and bright; the aspect of all nature sparkling and beautiful; peace and tranquillity breathed forth from the fair face of all inanimate things; while the tiger in man's heart was defiling with blood the noblest work of the Creator. The contrast rendered that whole day more dark, more sad, more terrible, than if heavy thunder-clouds had brooded over the devoted city, or storm and tempest had swept the valley, over-running with massacre and crime.

They met several of the soldiery, as they walked on; but, with an instinctive reverence for sorrow, the men made large way for them to pass; and Agnes, with trembling steps and weeping eyes, approached the house where her father's body lay, and entered the room of death. For an instant she clung almost convulsively to her lover's bosom, when the fearful sight of the inanimate clay, streaked with the dark blood of the death-wound, appeared before her; but then, loosening her hold, with a wild gasp she crept towards the bed, as if afraid to wake him; and, kneeling down, kissed the cold hand

and cheek. She knelt there long, till the daylight faded, and Algernon gently laid his hand upon her arm, saying, "Rouse yourself, dearest Agnes! We have his last commands to obey. —He has given you to me for ever; but has charged me to convey you hence, if it be possible, before a new assault is made upon the place, hinting that you could point out the means of flight. Come, then, into another room, and let us speak of these things."

Agnes rose more calm than he had expected, and, laying her hand on his, she answered, "Whatever you ask me, I will do, Algernon; but you must let me watch here this night; I will come now, but it will be to return again soon; and I will try to clear my thoughts, and tell you what were the wishes and intentions of him who lies there so sadly still."

She turned her head from the bed, and, with her eyes cast down, withdrew into the outer room of the gardener's dwelling, where there was no one but an old servant; for the chief gardener himself had removed some weeks before to a more secure abode; and there, seating herself near the window, she seemed to watch with eyes half overflowing the last faint streaks of light which hung upon the western sky.

“He felt that it would end thus, Algernon,” she said at length, “and often talked to me of such evil chances, as if he would prepare my mind for the event. But it went worse with him lately; for something—I know not what—had disturbed and grieved him. He spoke then of sending me to the Electress mother, and seemed doubtful and anxious; whereas before he had always seemed to feel that, if it were God’s will he should fall, you would protect and defend me.”

“It was, my love, that he heard suddenly, and from one who knew not all the facts,” Algernon replied, “that, which he would not listen to from me.”

“I fear it embittered his last hour,” said Agnes, gloomily; “for he left me this morning more sad and careworn than ever. I fear that doubts and apprehensions for his child, troubled him in the hour of death.”

“Not so, dear one,” replied her lover;—“by a happy chance, my page found means this morning to force his way into the town, having been sent by me to England; and thus I was enabled to assure him that every obstacle between me and you was removed for ever. It is a sad and horrible tale, Agnes, not fitted for

ears so pure as yours to hear ; but of this, at all events, be assured, that on that score, at least, your father's heart was at rest, and that our union has his blessing."

" Oh, thank God !" said Agnes, with a deep-drawn breath, as if the bitterest part of her sorrow was withdrawn. " These are balmy tidings, indeed, Algernon. But I recollect not what I was saying.—Yes ; it was that he wished me to go to the Electress Louisa ; but, ere his messenger could return, the passage from the other side was cut off ; and then he would have sent me forth by the passages which lead out through the rock towards the Wolf's Well, beyond the enemy's posts. But I could not go alone, and there was no single person with whom he would trust my safety. If many went, we were sure to be discovered and stopped, and the peril seemed too great for the occasion."

" Such is not the case, now," answered Algernon, the meaning of Herbert's words breaking upon him. " You are in far more peril here than anywhere in the open country. There we should only be made prisoners. But the storming of a fortress is an awful thing, Agnes, and there are fates worse than death. However," he continued, as she bent down her head with

a pale cheek, "it is well to be prepared for any event. Know you the way, dear one? Have you the keys?"

"This is all that is needful," answered Agnes, drawing a key from her bosom. "He has made me wear this ever since the siege began; and long ago he taught me all the ways, with a prophetic warning that I might one day need them."

"I remember your telling me so when first we met," answered her lover; and they went on to speak of many things connected with their past, their present, and their future fate, with that desultory discursiveness in which the mind is fond to indulge in moments of deep grief. The old servant of the gardener came in upon them to light a lamp, and recalled them to the present; and the night-drum beating reminded Algernon Grey that his men were probably still in the outworks. He loved not to leave Agnes there alone; but she herself was the first to propose it. "I must go and take my place in that room," she said; "and there I will spend the night in prayer. You will leave me, dear Algernon, for you must be sadly weary. You were in arms all last night, I know."

“I will leave you for an hour, Agnes, for I must visit the posts,” he answered; “but then I will return and keep watch beside you:—or in this room, if you would be alone, though there are no feelings between you and me that the living eyes of him whom we shall watch in death, might not have seen and sanctioned.”

“No,” she said; “no; you shall stay here, if you will, when you return. I own that to have you near me will be a comfort and a support; but for the time I am there, I would fain be alone. Yet come with me to the door. I am very weak and foolish; but it is the first sight of the cold and motionless clay of those we once loved so dearly, that unnerves the heart.”

Algernon Grey took the lamp and guided her to the door, paused when she hesitated for an instant, gazing forward, and then, when she advanced steadily carrying the lamp which he had given her, he closed the door and left her, telling the old man to remain in the outer room till he returned.

With a quick step the young Englishman hurried up first to the blockhouse, and thence, by the same paths he had pursued in the morning, to the terrace and the Cavalier. Everywhere he found the soldiers dull, heavy, and dispirited. They seemed to mourn for Herbert

as if he had been a father, and to look upon the defence of the castle as hopeless without him to lead and guide them. In a brief conversation, the officer commanding in the Cavalier mentioned the facts which he had himself observed, and besought Algernon to return to the castle and tell the Governor the state of things at the outworks.

“It would be better,” he said, “to relieve the men at once, and send troops that have not been accustomed to fight under the poor Colonel’s command. If need be, we can serve elsewhere, but the men are much fatigued.”

There was much reason in what he said; and Algernon, speeding back to the castle, made his report to the Governor in person. Mervyn saw at once the expediency of the arrangements proposed, and promised they should be made, adding, “Tilly has allowed me to send an officer to Horace Vere to state exactly our situation, and to ask his commands; but this fierce Bavarian would not grant a suspension of arms even till our messenger’s return, thinking, I believe, to wear us out with watching and anxiety, without any intention of renewing the assault at present. Nevertheless I beg that you would escort the lady hence at once if you can find means.”

Some officers came in at this moment with reports; and Algernon Grey withdrew to return to the gardener's house. All was quiet and still within; and, advancing to the door of the room, where he had left Agnes, he opened it partially, saying, "I have returned, dear girl." He saw that she was kneeling and in prayer; and, closing the door again, he dismissed the old man to bed, wrapped his cloak round him, and seated himself to think.

For more than an hour he remained in meditation; but he was wearied with long watching and great exertion for the last few days. His eyes felt heavy; and, ere he had power to resist the influence, he slept. He was awoke by a quick, sharp, measured tramp; and, turning his ear he listened. "Fresh men going down to relieve the people at the outworks," he said—"I cannot have slept long;" and, seating himself again in the chair from which he had risen, he began to meditate once more upon his situation. Three minutes had scarcely elapsed when the report of a cannon made him start up again. Then came a rattling fire of small-arms, and then a peal of ordnance from the inner works of the castle. Springing to the door, he ran out, and ascended an outer staircase which led

to a high balcony above. There the view was clear over the young, lately planted trees of the garden towards the castle; and, though the night was somewhat dark, it was soon brightened by a long line of fire that ran along between him and the great casemate. At the same instant he heard shots and shouts from the side of the cavalier; and the terrible truth burst upon his mind, that he was there alone with her he loved best on earth, between two large parties of the enemy's troops. By some means the imperialists had passed the outworks, and gained the very foot of the inner defences. All return to the castle was cut off; and it was vain to hope, that, though they might be repulsed from the walls of the castle itself, the enemy could ever be dislodged from the advantageous position they had gained. Thought was vain. There was no room for exertion. Courage and daring could do nothing; and all that remained was to save Agnes by flight, if flight were yet possible.

Hurrying down as speedily as possible, he re-entered the house and found her he loved in the outer room. "What is it?" she cried, with eyes full of terror.

"The enemy have gained the home gardens,"

answered Algernon Grey; "they are between us and the castle on the one side, and in the Pheasant-garden on the other. Instant flight, dear Agnes, is our only chance. You must not hesitate, dear girl—life is but a small consideration in comparison with what may happen, if we stay—you must not hesitate."

"Not for an instant," she answered; "it was his command, it is your wish, and I am ready;—one last look, and I go."

She returned to the room where her father's body lay; and then, after pressing her lips upon his, came forth, and joined her lover. She wept not, she trembled not—she was calm and firm; and they issued forth together, gazing on into the darkness. "This way," said Agnes, in a low tone; "it is not far.—Hark! how fiercely they are firing; they will not mind us. Let us pass through the labyrinth of clipped hornbeam. Under the arches we shall escape all eyes."

Hurrying on through narrow rows of shrubs cut into the form of arcades, without missing one path or turning, they came to the top of a large flight of steps, where the whole magnificent scene of a night attack upon a fortress was displayed to their eyes, by the continual flash-

ing of the cannon from the bastions, and the long, sudden blaze of the small-arms discharged by the regiments of arquebusiers below. Ever and anon the vast masses of the castle started out from the darkness, illuminated by the broad glare, and then were covered with a black veil again; while the thunder of the artillery broke, with awful grandeur, the stillness of the night. The fugitives paused only for a moment, however; but Agnes whispered, "Let us make haste—day will soon break;" and the castle clock, almost at the same moment, struck the hour of four. Algernon Grey counted but three, for the cannon interrupted the sound; but, hurrying down the steps, they walked along in the direction of the great terrace till, in the front of the rock which had been hewn away nearly into a wall, they came to a niche, before which was placed the statue of a water-god in the midst of a marble basin.

"Here," said Agnes, "here is the place. Let me feel, where is the lock?" and she ran her hand over the face of the niche. For nearly a minute she could not find the key-hole, but at length succeeded; and the stone door at once gave way, opening the mouth of a narrow passage.

“Take the key, and lock it,” she said, passing in first. Algernon Grey followed, and closed the door.

“You are safe; I trust you are safe, my beloved!” he cried, throwing his arms round her.

Agnes made no answer; but he could feel her sob violently upon his bosom, now that the extreme peril which had roused all her energies had ceased. He soothed and consoled her to the best of his power; and then, to engage her mind with other things, inquired, “Whither does this lead, dear girl?”

“Up into the hills,” she answered, “above the Wolf’s-well. It was intended for an aqueduct, I believe, to bring the waters of the stream down to the castle; but it has never been so used.—Let us on, Algernon, the bitter parting is over.”

Gently and kindly he led her on, feeling the way before him with his sheathed sword, and supporting the gentle being by his side with his left arm passed round her. The way was steep, and in some places rugged; and for full half an hour they went slowly on, hearing from time to time the tramp of men above them, and the constant roar of the artillery, showing the castle had

not yet fallen. Sometimes the air was close ; but very frequently a spot of dim light was seen on the left just above the level of their heads ; and the cool air blew in from without. At length the grey dawn could be distinguished streaming in through the apertures made to ventilate the conduit ; and in a quarter of an hour after, a door presented itself before them—was easily unlocked—and Agnes and her lover stood upon the side of the mountain out of sight of Heidelberg.

The fresh grey morning rested soberly upon the hills. The cannonade had ceased. No sounds broke the stillness of the scene around. The green Neckar flowed glistening on below. All bore the aspect of peace and tranquillity ; and, pressed in each other's arms, they thanked God for deliverance, allayed by some sorrow, but still merciful and sweet.

LETTER FROM AGNES, COUNTESS OF HILLINGDON,
TO AMELIA, PRINCESS OF SOLMS.

MADAM,

Not knowing where to address her Majesty, I enclose to you the account which she required of the events which have befallen me since the 23d of August

last; and I beg that your Highness will present it to her Majesty, with my humble duty, as soon as an opportunity shall offer.

The signature of this letter will show you that I have not failed to obey her Majesty's command, conveyed to me by Mr. Carleton, to give my hand to my Lord the Earl of Hillingdon, sooner than I had myself proposed.

I trust that your Highness will receive the assurances of unalterable attachment with which I am

Your Highness's most faithful servant,

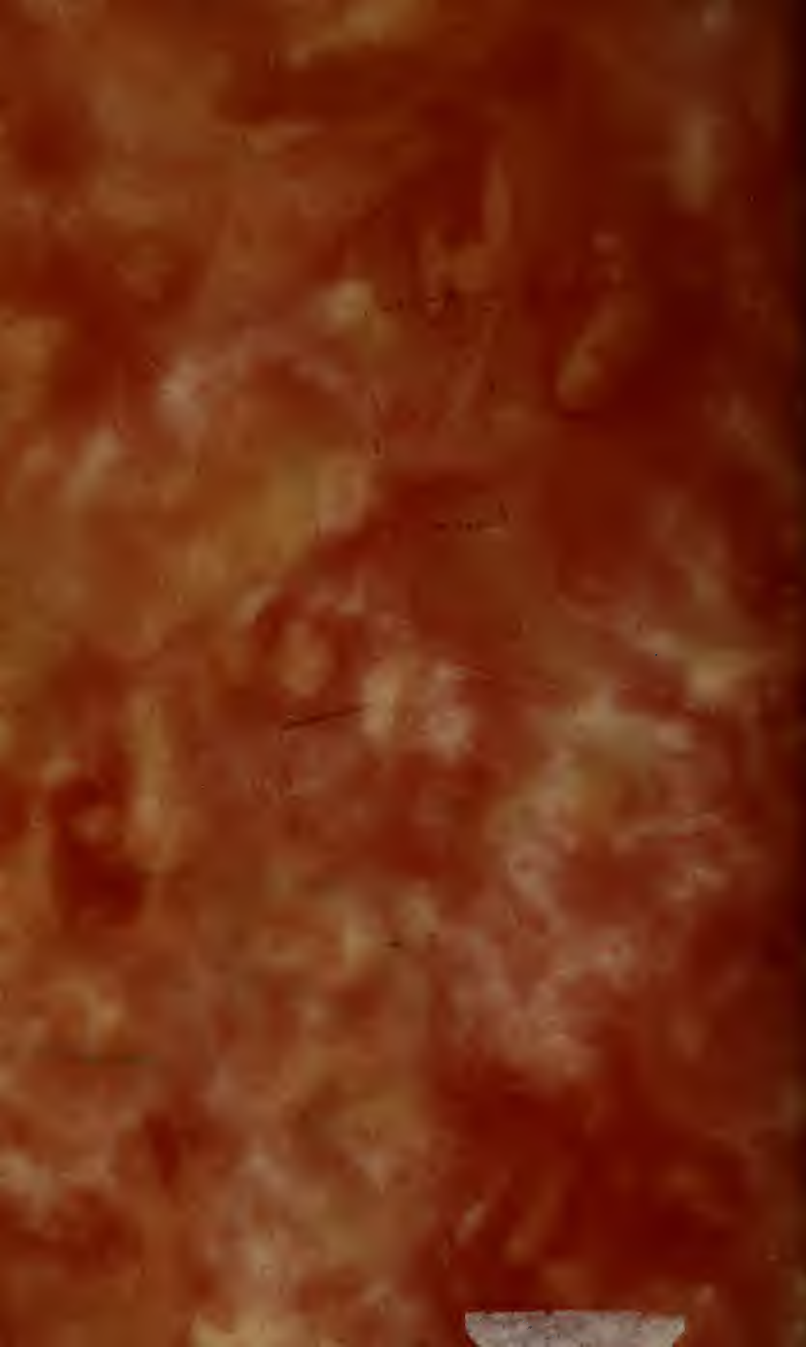
AGNES HILLINGDON.

THE HAGUE,

This 29th October, 1622.

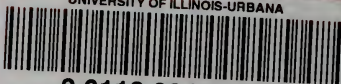
Post Scriptum.—I forgot to mention in the enclosed that the page joined us three days since, by the boat from Rotterdam, and the ransom of the old servant who was taken, has been agreed upon for two hundred French crowns.

THE END.





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